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WRITING
TODAY**

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GERMAN
WRITING
TODAY

EDITED BY
CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON

PENGUIN BOOKS
BALTIMORE • MARYLAND

Penguin Books Ltd, Harmondsworth,
Middlesex, England
Penguin Books Inc., 3300 Clipper Mill Road,
Baltimore 11, Md, U.S.A.
Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood,
Victoria, Australia

First published 1967

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For HANS ARP: 'Das Rad', all rights for the poem 'Das Rad' by Hans Arp are held by Verlags AG 'Die Arche', Zürich. (This translation by Michael Hamburger first appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 3 September 1964.) For Hans Arp's 'Amerika' from *Auf einem Bein*, to Limes Verlag Max Niedermayer, Wiesbaden;

For HANS CARL ARTMANN: 'ich bin ein polares gestirn' from *verbarium* by Hans Carl Artmann, to Walter-Verlag AG, Olten, Switzerland. (This translation by Michael Hamburger first appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 3 September 1964.);

For INGEBORG BACHMANN: 'An die Sonne' from *Anrufung des grossen Bären*, to J. Piper Verlag, Munich;

For KONRAD BAYER: 'the pear' from *Der Kopf des Vitus Bering*, to Walter-Verlag AG, Olten, Switzerland;

For HANS BENDER: 'Schafsblut' from *Mit dem Postschiff*, 24 stories by Hans Bender, 1962, to Carl Hanser Verlag, Munich;

MANFRED BIELER: 'Hochzeitsmarsch' and 'Dalya' are published by permission of Aufbau-Verlag, Berlin and Weimar;

For JOHANNES BOBROWSKI: 'Die Duna', 'Kaunas 1941', and 'Am Strom', to Donald Carroll. For 'Pruzzische Elegie' to Donald Carroll and Union Verlag, East Berlin;

For HILDE DOMIN: 'Angsttraum' from *Rückkehr der Schiffe*, to S. Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, and to the author;

For GÜNTHER EICH: 'Bestellung' and 'Zu spät für Bescheidenheit' from *Zu den Akten*, Copyright © 1964, to Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main; for 'Darmstädter Rede bei der Entgegennahme des Georg Büchner Preises' to Suhrkamp Verlag and the author;

For HANS MAGNUS ENZENSBERGER: 'lachesis lapponica', 'middle class blues' and 'karl heinrich marx' from *blindenschrift*, Copyright © 1964, to Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main. (This translation by Michael Hamburger of 'lachesis lapponica' first appeared in *The Times Literary*

10 Acknowledgements

Supplement, 3 September 1964; the translations of 'middle class blues' and 'karl heinrich marx' first appeared in *Stand*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1965.);

For ERICH FRIED: 'Die Hinrichtung' from *Warngedichte* 1964, to Carl Hanser Verlag, Munich; for 'The Portion' and 'Kinderstube' to the author. (This translation of 'Die Hinrichtung' first appeared in *Stand*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1965; the translation of 'Kinderstube' first appeared in *Encounter*, August, 1966.);

For GÜNTER BRUNO FUCHS: 'Pennergesang' from *Pennergesang: Gedichte und Chansons*, 1965, to Carl Hanser Verlag, Munich;

For EUGEN GOMRINGER: 'beweglich/weil weglos', 'worte sind schatten' and 'small and yellow' from *die konstellationen*, to the author, Eugen Gomringer Press, Frauenfeld. (This translation by Edwin Morgan of 'beweglich/weil weglos' first appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 3 September 1964.);

For GÜNTER GRASS: 'In the Egg', translated by Michael Hamburger, from *Selected Poems* by Günter Grass, Copyright © 1966 by Martin Secker and Warburg Ltd. Reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc. (Originally published in German by Hermann Luchterhand Verlag GmbH, under the title of 'Im Ei', in *Gleisdreieck*.) For 'Noch zehn Minuten bis Buffalo' to Hermann Luchterhand Verlag GmbH, Neuwied am Rhein, and to the author;

For RUDOLF HAGELSTANGE: 'Tintenfisch' from *Corazón*, to Hoffmann and Campe Verlag, Hamburg;

For HELMUT HEISSENBÜTTEL: Sections 'C' and 'D' of 'Topographien' from *Textbuch I*, '1 Mann auf 1 Bank' from *Textbuch IV*, 'Das neue Zeitalter' and 'Klassen-Analyse' from *Textbuch V*, to Walter-Verlag AG, Olten, Switzerland;

For WALTER HÖLLERER: 'Zweierlei Singen' from *Gedichte*, Copyright © 1964, to Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main. (This translation by Michael Hamburger first appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 30 September 1965.);

For MAX HÖLZER: 'Pablo Picasso: La Californie 1956' and 'Frau und Vogel' from *Nigredo* by Max Hölzer, to Insel Verlag, Frankfurt am Main;

For PETER HUCHEL: 'Wei Dun und die alten Meister' from *Chausseen* by Peter Huchel, Copyright © S. Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1963. (This translation by Christopher Middleton first appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 20 February 1964.);

For ERNST JANDL: 'Calypso' and 'fragment' from *Zwischen Räume/8 mal Gedichte*, to Limes Verlag Max Niedermayer, Wiesbaden. For 'stilton cheese' and 'sweaters uncle a frog' to the author. (All except 'fragment' were first printed in England in *Writers Forum Poets*, No. 11. 'Calypso', 'fragment' and 'stilton cheese' are to be included in a collection of Ernst Jandl's poems, entitled *Laut und Luise*, to be published as No. 12 in the series *Walter Drücke* by Walter-Verlag AG, Olten, Switzerland.);

For UWE JOHNSON: 'Berlin, border of the divided world' to Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main. (This translation by Ursule Molinaro was originally published in *Evergreen Review*, Vol. 5, No. 21, Copyright © 1961);

For KARL KROLOW: 'Gewalt' from *Fremde Körper*, Copyright © 1959, and 'Aus dem Leben eines Tisches' from *Unsichtbare Hände*, Copyright © 1962, to Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main;

For GÜNTER KUNERT: 'Bericht' and 'Der polnische Baum' from *Tagträume*, 1964, 'Film verkehrt eingespannt' and 'Das Fenster ist aufgestossen' from *Erinnerung an einen Planeten*, 1963, and 'Sorgen' from *Verkündigung des Wetters*, 1966, to Carl Hanser Verlag, Munich, and the author. (This translation by Christopher Middleton of 'Sorgen' first appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 30 September 1965.);

For SIEGFRIED LENZ: 'Lukas, sanftmütiger Knecht' from *Jäger des Spotts*, to Hoffmann and Campe Verlag, Hamburg. (This translation by Kathrine Talbot first appeared in the *London Magazine*, Vol. 7, No. 4, April 1960.);

For REINHARD LETTAU: 'The Obstacle Course' from *Obstacles*, 1966, to Calder and Boyars Ltd, and to Pantheon Books;

For JAKOV LIND: 'Hurrah for Freedom' from *Soul of Wood* by Jakov Lind, translated by Ralph Manheim, to Jonathan Cape Ltd. Reprinted by permission of Grove Press Inc. Copyright © 1964 by Jonathan Cape Ltd, London;

For CHRISTOPH MECKEL: 'Der Löwe' to the author; for 'Der Pfau' from *Wildnisse* by Christoph Meckel, Copyright © S. Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1962;

For FRANZ MON: 'grundriss' from *artikulationen*, to Günther Neske Verlag, Pfullingen;

For HANS ERICH NOSSACK: 'Das Mal' from *Begegnung im Vorraum*, Copyright © 1963, to Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main;

12 Acknowledgements

For HEINZ PIONTEK: 'Die Zeit einer Frau' from *Kastanien aus dem Feuer*, to Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart;

For KUNO RAEER: 'Variationen über ein Thema von Leibniz' from *Die verwandelten Schiffe*, to Hermann Luchterhand Verlag GmbH, Neuwied am Rhein;

For CHRISTA REINIG: 'Mein Besitz' and 'Hört Weg' from Christa Reinig, *Gedichte*, Copyright © S. Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1963;

For KLAUS ROEHLER: 'The Dignity of Night' from *The Dignity of Night*, to Barrie and Rockliff;

For NELLY SACHS: 'In der blauen Ferne' and 'Kommt einer von ferne' from *Fahrt ins Staublose*, Copyright © 1961, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main;

For ARNO SCHMIDT: an extract from *Die Gelehrtenrepublik* by Arno Schmidt, to Calder and Boyars Ltd and to Stahlberg Verlag, Karlsruhe;

For WOLFDIETRICH SCHNURRE: 'Gehenkter Partisan' and 'Toter Soldat' from *Kassiber: neue Gedichte*, Copyright © 1964, to Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main;

For MARTIN WALSER: 'Nach Siegfrieds Tod' from *Lügendgeschichten*, Copyright © 1964, to Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main;

For PETER WEISS: 'Meine Ortschaft' from *Atlas*, to Klaus Wagenbach Verlag, Berlin;

For WOLFGANG WEYRAUCH: 'Ezra Pound' from *Die Spur: neue Gedichte*, to Walter-Verlag AG, Olten, Switzerland. (This translation by Michael Hamburger first appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 3 September 1964.)

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Introduction

My aim in compiling this anthology has been to present a range of work by some of the best German-language writers of the past fifteen years. With one exception, all the writings included are self-contained. I admitted no extracts from novels or plays, out of respect for the writers themselves. Also it would not have been sensible to offer samples of work which people can read in available translations: a great many novels and plays have been translated from German since 1950, and these are listed at the end of this introduction.

I have tried to prevent the book from becoming a haphazard assemblage of translations. If good translations of stories and poems existed in books or magazines, they were adopted; but many of the best writers now in their prime are represented by translations done for the occasion. All the same, an anthology consisting of translations is not the same sort of thing as an anthology of originals. Its limits are, to a degree, the limits of translatability. This applies especially to literary texts of an experimental kind, by which a translator may be hard pressed to maintain his proper standard of maximum approximation. Editorial omniscience, what is more, should not be assumed: of such limits I would only claim that I have looked as hard and as far as I could.

Some of the most significant experimental texts in German do not work out in English, not because they are empty formalistic exercises, but because they explore linguistic behaviour-patterns which are uniquely German or cannot be *adequately* re-created in any other idiom. This can be the case even in straight stories, for example Wolfgang Hildesheimer's delightful 'Warum ich mich in eine Nachtigall verwandelt habe' ('Why I turned into a nightingale'). The narrative here is developed out of a play on the German phrase to denote the singing of the nightingale – *eine Nachtigall schlägt*, where *schlägt* means *sings*, though in any other context it means *hits* (the story is a satire on human brutality). The last sentence

in the story, which realizes the German ambiguity, makes the whole text untranslatable.

The experimental texts which do appear in this book – Schmidt, Bayer, Heissenbüttel – were ones in which the change or novelty or play affect not so much the semantics of the language as syntax or the point of imaginative view. This was also the case with certain poems. The wide range of concrete or phonic experimental poetry is hardly translatable, either because the words here are being used as graphic materials, or because they are rendered into structures of sound. That is why such texts appear sometimes in bookshops without foreign language departments, or travel in international exhibitions. Yet an anthology of translations, which may for technical reasons decimate the purist vanguard, can make amends by presenting texts which have the first intensity in less recondite forms. My selection may be incomplete because it has no plates displaying the new visual and audio-visual developments which get 'poetry' off the ordinary printed page. But I doubt if it is incomplete because it does not include work by several 'safe' writers.

This brings me to another hazard. One cannot say 'New Writing in Germany', because there are two Germanies. And there is Austria, from which many of the great 20th century German-language writers have come; there is East Switzerland, where German is the literary (but not the spoken) language; there is also Luxembourg and there is Liechtenstein – from the latter, Dieter Hülsmanns not long ago launched an ambitious tri-lingual little magazine called *interferences*. This selection is determined, therefore, not by national boundaries but by linguistic ones. The area so defined is geographically large, and it is culturally (also politically) very diverse. In the two Germanies alone, the massive book-production of the past decade has been symptomatic of an unusually fertile and complex, but also politically tense, literary situation. In both Germanies, language and meaning alike are deeply problematic matters, to say the least. The troubles met by the German modernist vanguard of fifty years ago have become, in our time, highly complex and acute. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, for one, is a poet whose shelves are stocked with scientific works on cybernetics and linguistics, plus reference books of all kinds.

There are two areas to which the selection does less than justice: the German Democratic Republic and East Switzerland. (To do justice to each sector in the whole language area, presenting the most articulate and significant writers of each, would require several separate anthologies.) Certainly this selection does include work by more GDR writers than have ever appeared together before. But it omits several whom an informed East German would miss, e.g. Franz Fühmann, Erwin Strittmatter, Christa Wolf, writers who are much read and discussed in the local context of East German cultural and social tendencies. (One says 'tendencies' – the informed East German might call it the 'rationally controlled creation of new literary and social forms'.) I also decided not to include lyrics by Wolf Biermann; in translation and without his weirdly luminous music, much of their caustic impact is lost. Here again the ideal anthology would have gone beyond the printed page to include a stereo LP of Biermann in action. The suppression of this remarkable artist's work in the GDR in December 1965 was one more instance of the way in which originality suffers at the hands of authoritarian bureaucratic rule in the GDR power-structure.

Of the Swiss writers not represented, Max Frisch and Friedrich Dürrenmatt will be the first whose absence is conspicuous. Their best work is lengthier than was convenient; extracts would have been superfluous, since plays and novels by both are easily available now in translations. These are the two writers who, during the past ten years, have put German-Swiss writing firmly on the map. I have read many younger German-Swiss writers, the most recent being Peter Bichsel. But I have not found in their work the radical spirit which was a touchstone of mine in discriminating between the best and the next best. Of recent Swiss novels, O. F. Walter's *The Mute* is the best to have been translated; perhaps one day somebody will discover and translate some of the fastidious prose of Fritz Meyer.

West Germany is the most heavily represented sector in the language area. Here I must mention one omission, Heinrich Böll, which I excuse on the grounds that his novels and stories are already widely known in translation. Connoisseurs will regret one or two other omissions, notably Wolfgang Koeppen. One prose-work of

his would have been of special interest to English readers, a travel-piece about London. It was too long, as was his brilliant descriptive account of a few weeks in Spain, 'Ein Fetzen von der Stierhaut', which is definitely one of the few masterpieces of contemporary prose. Only one novel by Koeppen has been translated into English, *Death in Rome* (1956); but his work displays one of the most vivid sensibilities of the time.

As I have said before, some writings in this selection have appeared already in books (e.g. Jakov Lind, Klaus Roehler); but most were translated for the occasion. The notes on authors who are represented contain details of existing translations from their work. I also mentioned earlier that many contemporary German writers have recently appeared in English translations – more, perhaps, than in any comparable period before. But has there been a breakthrough, on our part, into a better understanding of what new motives and forms have been developing in the snake-pit of Central Europe during the past twenty years? One might hope, at least, that there has been a reduction in the number of English people who assume that all writing in German is portentous, provincial or obscure. It is certain that there has been an increase in the number of German writers who are not bookish.

My own hope is that people who read this selection and find things to enjoy, will also find that these things do 'urge the mind to certain transformations'. This is, at least, one definition (that of Paul Valéry) of how a literary work stimulates interest. If any person finds any of these writings of interest for this reason, then it could also be a sign that there are properties of language which can become common: usable bridges across the huge gaps in human understanding.

The list which follows is intended as a guide to translations from works by writers who have become known since 1950, but are not represented. Translators' names appear in brackets. The list omits details of works by the twenty or so older modern authors translated since 1950: Rilke, Kafka, Musil, Brecht, Thomas Mann, Stefan Zweig, Robert Walser, Fallada, Plievier, Hesse, Kasack, Gütersloh, Jünger, Andres, Zuckmayer, Hochwälder.

ILSE AICHINGER, *The Bound Man* (Eric Mosbacher) 1955; ALFRED ANDERSCH, *Flight to Afar* (Michael Bullock) 1958, *The Red-Head* (Michael Bullock) 1961, *The Night of the Giraffe* (Christa Armstrong) 1964; HEINRICH BÖLL, *Acquainted with the Night* (Richard Graves) 1955, *Adam, where art thou?* (Mervyn Savill) 1955, *The Train was on Time* (Richard Graves) 1955, *Traveller, if you come to Spa* (Mervyn Savill) 1956, *The Bread of our Early Years* (Mervyn Savill) 1957, *The Unguarded House* (Mervyn Savill) 1957, *Billiards at Half-Past Nine* (Patrick Bowles) 1961; HEIMITO VON DODERER, *The Demons* (Richard and Clara Winston) 1961; FRIEDRICH DÜRRENMATT, *The Judge and his Hangman* (Cyrus Brooks) 1954, *The Pledge* (Richard and Clara Winston) 1959, *A Dangerous Game* (Richard and Clara Winston) 1960, *The Quarry* (Eva Morreale) 1962, *The Visit* (Patrick Bowles) 1962, *Four Plays* (Gerhard Mellhouse, Michael Bullock, William McElwee, James Kirkup) 1964; GISELA ELSNER, *The Giant Dwarfs* (Joel Carmichael) 1964; MAX FRISCH, *Homo Faber* (Michael Bullock) 1958, *I'm not Stiller* (Michael Bullock) 1961, *Three Plays* (Michael Bullock) 1962, *A Wilderness of Mirrors* (Michael Bullock) 1965; GERD GAISER, *The Falling Leaf* (Paul Findlay) 1956, *The Last Dance of the Season* (M. Waldmann) 1960; ALBRECHT GOES, *The Burnt Sacrifice* (Michael Hamburger) 1956, *Arrow to the Heart* (Constantine Fitzgibbon) 1961; STEFAN HEYM, *The Crusaders* (English by the author) 1950, *The Lenz Papers* (English by the author) 1964; ROLF HOCHHUTH, *The Representative* (Robert D. Macdonald) 1963; WALTER JENS, *The Blind Man* (Michael Bullock) 1954; H. H. KIRST, *The Lieutenant Must be Mad* (Richard and Clara Winston) 1951, *Gunner Asch Goes to War: Zero Eight Fifteen* (Robert Kee) 1956, *No One Will Escape* (Richard Graves) 1959, *The Officer Factory* (Robert Kee) 1962, *The Night of the General* (J. M. Brownjohn) 1963; WOLFGANG KOEPPEN, *Death in Rome* (Mervyn Savill, 1956; JOACHIM MAASS, *The Gouffé Case* (Michael Bullock) 1960; GREGOR VON REZZORI, *The Hussar* (Catherine Hunter) 1960; HANS WERNER RICHTER, *The Odds Are Against Us* (Robert Kee) 1950, *They Fell From God's Hands* (George Sainsbury) 1956; O. F. WALTER, *The Mute* (Michael Bullock) 1962.

Several of these writers, as well as others, are represented in the anthologies *Great German Short Stories* (ed. Stephen Spender) New

York, 1960; *Modern German Stories* (ed. H. M. Waidson) London, 1961; and *German Short Stories* (ed. Richard Newnham) in the Penguin Parallel Text series, 1964. Several of the poets represented, and some others, appear in the anthology *Modern German Poetry, 1910-60* (ed. Michael Hamburger and Christopher Middleton) London and New York, 1962; see also Jerome Rothenberg, *New Young German Poets*, San Francisco, 1959.

1966

CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON

Hans Arp

THE WHEEL

Perpetually he considers the pros and cons
of having himself covered with print
and bound up into a book
since after all he is indistinguishable
from an immaculate sheet of paper.
In place of a heart
he wears a watermark.
He never greets passers-by
and never wants to be greeted
whether with or without a top hat.
Nor does it ever occur to him
to seize a dagger and feel like stabbing
though many experts come
and admire the lovely white sheet of paper.
Many many experts come each day
to hold the lovely white sheet of paper up to the light
and as soon as they discover the watermark
to shriek as though with a single voice:
the watermark the watermark the wheel!
As soon as the experts discover the watermark
they nearly have kittens
and immediately inflect
as words are inflected.
One and the same expert inflects as a singular person
as a singular person and as a plural person
in the present past and future.
The admirers are fearless.
All they can think of now is inflect or break
and the wheel.

Translated by Michael Hamburger

Peter Weiss

MY PLACE

When I started wondering what human habitation or what landscape would be best suited to be described as my place, many possibilities occurred to me. But, from the place where I was born, which is called Novaves and which according to the guidebooks lies next to Potsdam on the railway line to Berlin, and passing over the cities of Bremen and Berlin where I spent my childhood, to the cities of London, Prague, Zürich, Stockholm, Paris, to which I drifted later, all my stopping places have had something provisional about them, as well as all the shorter stops in between, little places I have not mentioned, Warnsdorf in Bohemia, or Montagnola in the Tessin, or Alingsås in West Sweden.

They were points of transit, they offered impressions whose essence could not be held steady, was always vanishing, and when I inquire what there is about them that can now be stressed and found valuable, to give a firm position in the topography of my life, I keep on coming up against what keeps retreating from me, all those cities become blurs, and only one place, where I spent only one day, remains constant.

The cities in which I lived, in whose houses I stayed, on whose streets I walked, with whose inhabitants I spoke, have no definite contours, they merge into one another, they are parts of a single perpetually changing earthly outside world, have a harbour to show in one place, a park in another, in one a work of art, in one a fair, a room in one, in another a gateway, they are available in the wandering design of my travels, they are reached and left again in a fraction of a second and their qualities have each time to be invented anew.

Only this one place, of which I had known for a long time, but which I saw so much later, is separate and special. It is a place for which I was destined but which I managed to avoid. I have had no experience of this place. I have no relation to it, except that my name was on the lists of the people who were supposed to be sent there for

ever. Twenty years later, I saw this place. It is unchangeable. Its buildings cannot be mistaken for buildings anywhere else.

It, too, has a Polish name, like my birthplace which someone showed me once from the window of a moving train. It is located in a region where my father, just before I was born, fought for a fabulous imperial army. The place is dominated by the surviving barracks of this army.

It was given a German name so that people would better understand those who worked and lived there.

The goods trains are clanking by in Auschwitz railway station. Whistlings of locomotives and smoke tumbling. Clashing sounds of buffers. The air full of the vapour of rain, the footpaths softened, the trees leafless and wet. Soot-blackened factories, surrounded by barbed wire and walls. Wooden carts grind past, pulled by thin horses, the peasant who drives them heavily muffled, earth-colour. Old women on the footpaths, wrapped in blankets, carrying bundles. Farther off in the fields a few farms, bushes and poplars. Everything gloomy and worn. Ceaselessly the trains on the embankment slowly rolling back and forth, small wagon windows with gratings. Sidings lead away to the barracks and farther still across empty fields to the end of the world.

Outside the hut area, reoccupied since the evacuation and looking as if the war had only just ended, iron railings rise up in front of the building which is now called a museum. Cars and buses stand in the parking lot, a group of school children is just going through the gate, a troop of soldiers in wine-red caps is returning from a tour of inspection. To the left, a long wooden barrack. A little window for the sale of brochures and postcards. Over-heated attendants' rooms. Immediately behind the barrack, low concrete walls, over them a grassy slope, ascending to the flat roof with the short thick square chimney. My map of the camp told me that I was already standing in front of the crematory, the small crematory, the first crematory, the crematory with the limited capacity. The barrack straight ahead – that was the barrack of the political section, there the registry was located, in which lists of arrivals and departures were drawn up, that is where the female clerks sat, that is where people wearing the death's-head emblem walked in and out.

I came here of my own free will. I was not unloaded from a train. I was not bludgeoned into this place. I have arrived twenty years too late.

Iron grids around the little windows of the crematory. To the side, a heavy decayed door, hanging crooked from its hinges, clammy cold inside. Crumbling stone floor. In a room immediately to the right, a large iron furnace. Rails in front of it, on these a metal vehicle shaped like a trough, the length of a human body. Inside the cellar two more furnaces, with the death-trucks on the rails, the furnace doors wide open, grey dust inside, on one of the trucks a bunch of dry flowers.

Thoughts, none. No impressions, except that I am alone here, that it is cold, that the furnaces are cold, the rigidity and rustiness of the trucks. Moisture drips from the black walls. Over there, an open doorway. It leads to the next room. A long room, I pace it out, twenty paces in length. Five paces wide. The walls whitewashed and peeling. The concrete floor worn, with hollows, many puddles; in the ceiling between the massive beams four square lidded apertures running like shafts through the thick stone casting. Cold. Breath at my mouth. Voices far off outside. Footsteps. I walk slowly through this grave. Feel nothing. See only this floor, these walls. Realize: through the apertures in the ceiling they threw the gritty preparation which in the damp air disseminated its gas. At the end of the room a door with iron fittings and a peephole, beyond it a narrow stairway, which leads into the open air. The open air.

There a gallows stands. A huge box of planks with openings that have collapsed inward, surmounted by the post with its beam protruding at a right angle. A notice says that the camp commandant was hanged here. As he stood on the box, the rope around his neck, he saw beyond the double fence of barbed wire the main street of the camp, with the poplars lining it. I walk up the slope on to the roof of the crematory. The wooden lids with the tar-board nailed over them can be lifted off the insertion holes. Down below is the dungeon. Medical orderlies with gas-masks opened the green cans, sprinkled the contents down on the faces as they gazed upward, quickly put the lids back on again.

On. I am still outside the camp, the gallows stands on the foundation walls of the interrogation barrack, in which there was a room containing a wooden frame with an iron tube above it. They used to hang from the iron tube and were swung back and forth and were beaten with the horsewhip.

The staff buildings stand close together, the administration, the commandant's building, the guard house. Tall windows overlook the crematory. Everywhere a view over the flat roof on to which the medical orderlies climbed. Very close, the barrack windows through which could be heard the beatings and screams from the swinging-room.

Everything close, tightly packed. Past the double row of concrete pillars which carry the barbed wire. Insulators on the wire; signs with the inscription VORSICHT HOCHSPANNUNG. To the right, sheds and buildings like stables, a few watch-towers; to the left, a booth with a sliding window and a shelf under the roof-overhang, for the stamping of documents, then suddenly a gate with the cast-iron curved strip of lettering in which the middle word MACHT tops the arch. A red and white striped barrier-pole is raised, I enter the square that is called the parent camp, *Stammlager*.

Have read and heard much about this. About the people who marched to work here in the early mornings, into the gravelpits, to road-construction sites, to the factories of the masters, and returned in the evenings carrying their dead, to the sound of an orchestra playing under the trees there. What does this mean, what do I know of it all? Now I only know how these paths look, lined with poplars, dead straight, with side-paths crossing them at right angles, between them the symmetrical 40-metres long two-storey blocks numbered 1 to 28. A small imprisoned town, with an order imposed by force, completely isolated. Here and there a visitor in the watery mist, looking up distantly at the houses. Far off, at a corner, the children passing by, led by their teacher.

Here are the kitchens on the main square, and in front of them a wooden sentry-box, with a high pointed roof and a weather-vane, with gaily painted stone dovetailing, like a tiny fort from a child's box of building bricks. It is the orderly officer's hut, from which the parades were supervised. I once knew about these parades, about

these hours of standing in rain and snow. Now I only know about this deserted loamy square, at the centre of which three posts supporting an iron rail are rammed into the ground. I know also how they stood here under the rail on stools, and how the stools were then knocked away from underneath them, and how the men with the death's-head caps hung on to their legs, to break their necks. Hearing and reading about it, I had seen it in front of me. Now I do not see it any more.

Above all, the impression that everything is smaller than I had imagined. From every point the boundary fence can be seen, the light-grey wall of concrete blocks beyond the barbed wire surround. At the outer right-hand corner of Blocks 10 and 11, connected by walls, the open wooden door in the centre, leading to the courtyard with the Black Wall.

This Black Wall, at whose edges short bits of planking jut forward to catch the bullets, is now disguised with cork slabs and wreaths. Forty paces from the gate to the wall. Pieces of tiling stamped into the sand floor. Along the damp-proofing of the left-hand building, whose windows are boarded over, runs the gutter where the blood gathered from the heaps of people who had been shot. They came running, naked, turning right at the doorway, down the six steps, two at a time, their arms held by the corporals. And behind the nailed-up windows of the building opposite, lay the women whose wombs were filled with a white cement-like mass. This is where the Block 11 washroom is located. Here the people who had to go to the wall took off their pitiful blue-striped clothes, here in this small dirty room, its lower half daubed with tar, its upper half with whitewash, full of rusty and blackish marks and stains, with a metal washing trough around it, run through with black pipes, crossed with the tubing of a shower, here they stood, with their numbers inked on to their ribs.

This is the washroom, this the stone corridor, divided up by iron gratings, first the block-leader's room, with the desk, camp-bed and cupboards, on the wall the motto EIN VOLK EIN REICH EIN FÜHRER, a wire grating over the doorway, like looking into a display cabinet. A panopticon, too, the courtroom opposite, with the long council-table, the minute-books on the grey cloth, for now and

then the sentences of death were also pronounced, by men who now live honest lives and enjoy social respect.

Now the stairway leading to the bunkers. They have taken the trouble to touch up the walls with a fringe of glimmering marble. The centre corridor, and to the right and left the side-corridors with the cells, about 3 by 2½ metres, with a bucket in a wooden box and a tiny window. Some, too, without a window, with only an air-hole in a top corner. There were up to forty people in here, they fought for a space by the door, tore off their clothes, collapsed. There were some who were still alive after a week without food. There were some whose thighs bore the marks of teeth, whose fingers were bitten off by the time they were dragged out.

I look into these places, which I myself eluded, stand between the fossil walls, hear no stamping of bootsoles, no shouts of command, no groaning and whimpering.

Here, off this narrow hallway, are the four standing-cells. Over there, is the opening by the floor, a half-metre square, iron bars inside it still, they crawled in there and stood four together, in a shaft measuring 90 by 90 centimetres. Above, the air-hole, smaller than the palm of a hand. Stood there for five nights, ten nights, two weeks every night after the heavy toil of the day.

Against the outside wall of the block there are concrete boxes, each with a small perforated metal lid. From here the air passes through the long wall-shaft into the cells in which they stood, their backs, knees, pressing on stone. They died standing, had to be scraped out down below when the morning came.

I have been walking around in the camp for hours now. I know my way. I have stood in the courtyard by the Black Wall. I have seen the trees behind the wall and have not heard the small-arms shots fired point blank in the back of the head. I have seen the beam from which they were hung by the hands that were tied behind their backs, only a foot above the floor. I have seen the rooms with the covered windows, in which women had their ovaries burned away by X-rays. I have seen the corridor in which they all stood, tens of thousands, and slowly moved into the doctor's room, and were led, one after another, behind the grey-green curtain, where they were forced on to a stool and had to raise the left arm and take an injection into the

heart, and through the window I saw the courtyard outside, where the one hundred and nineteen children from Zamosc waited and went on playing ball until their turn came.

I have seen the drawing on the kitchen-building roof, on which were painted in big letters the words: There is a way to freedom – its milestones are OBEDIENCE, INDUSTRIOUSNESS, CLEANLINESS, HONESTY, SINCERITY, SOBRIETY, and LOVE OF THE FATHERLAND. I have seen the mountain of shorn-off hair in a display cabinet. I have seen the relics of children's clothes, the shoes, the toothbrushes, the dentures. It was all cold and dead.

There is constantly the clanking and rumbling of the goods trains, puffing from the locomotives' funnels, the long-drawn-out whistlings. Trains move towards Birkenau through the broad flat landscape. Here, where the loamy path ascends to the railway embankment, and crosses it, the masters stood with outstretched hands and pointed to the open fields and decided on the foundation of the place of banishment which is now subsiding again into the marshy ground.

A single track deviates from the main one. Runs across the grass, is broken here and there, to a faded long building far off, to a barn with a collapsed roof, a crumbling tower, and runs straight through the arched barn door.

Whereas in the other camp everything was narrow and close, here everything is endless expanse, cannot be surveyed.

To the right, as far as the strips of woodland, the countless chimneys of dismantled and burned-out barracks. Only a few rows of these sties for hundreds of thousands are still standing. To the left, in line and vanishing into the haze, the stone buildings for the women prisoners. In the middle, more than a kilometre in length, the ramp. The principle of order and symmetry is detectable even in decay. Beyond the barn door, at the points, the rail divides to right and left, grass is growing between the sleepers, grass is growing from the macadam of the ramp which hardly rises above the level of the rails. It was a considerable way up to the opened doors of the goods trucks. They had to jump one and a half metres down on to the sharp-edged stones, throwing down their luggage, and their dead. To the right went the men who were allowed to live a bit longer, to the left the

women who were judged still fit for work, straight ahead for the old and the sick and the children lay the way that led to the two smoking chimneys.

The sun, near the horizon, breaks from the clouds and is reflected in the windows of the watch-towers. To right and left at the end of the ramp lie clumps of ruins among trees, the poplars by the fencing behind are motionless, far off in a farmyard some geese are cackling. To the right, that is the little birch forest. I see before me the women and children who are waiting there, a woman carries her baby at her breast, and in the background a group is moving towards the underground chambers. In the gigantic heap of stones, with its bent iron girders and collapsed concrete roof, one can still make out the architecture. Here a narrow staircase leads down into the hallway which is about 40 metres long, where the benches were, and numbered hooks in the wall for hanging up shoes and clothes. Here they stood naked, men, women and children, and they were told to remember their numbers, so that they would find their clothes again after the shower.

These long stone trenches, through which millions of people were sluiced into the rooms going off at right angles, with the holed metal columns, and were then brought up to the furnaces, to be scattered across the surrounding landscape as brown sweetish reeking smoke. These stone trenches, to which steps descend, worn smooth by millions of feet, empty now, returning again to sand and earth, lying peacefully under the setting sun.

This is where they walked, in the slow procession, coming from all parts of Europe, this is the horizon which they still saw, these are the poplars, these the watch-towers, with the sun reflected in the window-panes, this is the door, through which they went into the rooms that were bathed in glaring light, and in which there were no showers, only these squared metal columns, these are the foundation walls between which they died in the sudden darkness, in the gas which streamed out of the holes. And these words, this knowledge, they tell nothing, explain nothing. Only heaps of stone remain, overgrown with grass. Ashes remain in the earth, ashes of those who died for nothing, who were torn from their homes, their shops, their workshops, away from their children, their wives, husbands, lovers,

away from all everyday things, and flung into something incomprehensible. Nothing is left but the total meaninglessness of their death.

Voices. A bus has driven up, and children climb out of it. The class is now inspecting the ruins. For a while the children listen to the teacher, then they clamber around on the stones, some are already jumping down, they laugh and chase one another, a girl is running down a long cutting which passes beside the remnants of rails across a patch of concrete. This was the slide along which the dead bodies slid to the trucks. Looking back as I walk towards the women's camp, I can still see the children among the trees and hear the teacher clapping his hands to assemble them.

Just as the sun is setting, the ground-mists rise and coil around the low barracks. The doors are open. I walk in, somewhere. And now it is like this: here the breathing, the whispering and rustling is still not covered up by the stillness, these bunks, in three layers, along the side-walls and in the middle, not yet quite deserted, here is the straw, in the heavy shadows, the thousands of bodies can still be sensed, far down, at floor-level, on the planks, in the roofing bays, between the brick supporting walls, packed close together, six in each pit, here the outside world has not quite penetrated, here you can still expect some movement inside, the raising of a head, a hand stretching out.

Yet after a while everything is silent and unmoving even here. A living man has come and what happened here hides itself from him. The living man who comes here, from another world, has nothing but his knowledge of figures, written reports, statements by witnesses; it lies heavy upon him, but he can only grasp what he experiences himself. Only when he himself is dragged away from his table and manacled and kicked and beaten does he know what this is. Only when, beside him, they are herding people together and knocking them down, loading them into wagons, does he know how this is.

Now he is only standing in a vanished world. Here there is nothing more for him to do. For a while everything is utterly still.

Then he knows that it has not ended yet.

Translated by Christopher Middleton

Peter Huchel

WEI DUN AND THE OLD MASTERS

Marvelling at the old masters,
Who painted boulders as bones of the earth
And thin mists as the skin of hills,
I had tried, with vertical brush,
With quick strokes and slow ones,
To colour the moist radiance of rain.

But as moon and sun shone
On land going more and more to ruin
It was not boulders that were the earth's bones –
Human bones were grinding in the sand
Where tanks ripped with guzzling tracks
Roads open to their grey marrow.

Old masters, I scraped the paint block,
I cleaned the brush of goat hair.
Yet as I rambled behind the foe
I saw the meadows waterless,
The mill wheel shattered, in hardened gear
The ox hang rigid in the whim shaft,
The temple porch plundered
Where on glazed tiles in a heap
The snake dozed all the white noon.

Old masters, how can I paint
The river's rocky dorsal fins
As if, in the shallows, there was lurking
Some giant fish with gills of sun.
And paint the cool bloom of the mist,
The grey whiteness of buoyant snowy air,
As if soft feathers floated from a windy nest.

Where, where have they gone, your heavens,
 Into what distances, exalted masters,
 The breath of the world, so vulnerable?
 Images of terror visited me
 And etched my eye with smoke and sorrow.

Where have you gone, Boatman Playing the Flute?
 Do you watch in the rain the wild geese flying?
 Over the river at night a moaning went.
 Your wife with a smoking branch raked
 Ashes and embers of your bamboo hut,
 To discover there your blackened skull.

And Old Man Going Home from a Village Feast,
 Quietly riding your water buffalo,
 Through the coolness of falling dew,
 Didn't your servant stop in horror
 And let the rope loosely hang down?
 You rode the buffalo behind the cliff.
 By then the foe was at your door.

Where is the Farm by the Lake, fanned
 By a chevelure of trees and grasses?
 And where in the snow, filtered through mist,
 The lonely Village in the High Mountains?
 Search behind the penfold of the fire.
 War has baked all things dry
 In this kiln of death.

Where are the voices, noise of gongs,
 The odour of pigment, you poets and painters
 Of the Landscape Populated by Scholars?
 Dumb, on the level field, how you lie,
 Robbed of your shoes, your amulets,
 Abandoned to the birds and winds.

Heaven and Earth sustain
Still the ten thousand things.
Deep down, the bones rot.
But the breath flies upward,
Flowing as light you walked through once,
Old masters, with great composure.

Translated by Christopher Middleton

Günter Grass

IN THE EGG

We live in the egg,
We have covered the inside wall
of the shell with dirty drawings
and the Christian names of our enemies.
We are being hatched.

Whoever is hatching us
is hatching our pencils as well.
Set free from the egg one day
at once we shall draw a picture
of whoever is hatching us.

We assume that we're being hatched
We imagine some good-natured fowl
and write school essays
about the colour and breed
of the hen that is hatching us.

When shall we break the shell?
Our prophets inside the egg
for a middling salary argue
about the period of incubation.
They posit a day called X.

Out of boredom and genuine need
we have invented incubators.
We are much concerned about our offspring inside the egg.
We should be glad to recommend our patent
to her who looks after us.

But we have a roof over our heads.
Senile chicks,
polyglot embryos
chatter all day
and even discuss their dreams.

And what if we're not being hatched?
If this shell will never break?
If our horizon is only that
of our scribbles, and always will be?
We hope that we're being hatched.

Even if we only talk of hatching
there remains the fear that someone
outside our shell will feel hungry
and crack us into the frying pan with a pinch of salt. –
What shall we do then, my brethren*inside the egg?

Translated by Michael Hamburger

Christoph Meckel

THE LION

A lion came into my house at night and lay down beside me. At first I did not know that it was a lion. I heard something tapping and groping its way through my house, whose doors were open; I saw something wide and dark coming into my room, it snuffled at me, and lay down beside me. In the half-light I recognized, later, a lion. He was breathing deeply and regularly and he soon fell asleep, it seemed. From his mane came a smell of mould and leaves, wet fresh earth and a wild animal-smell which quite dazed me. I could tell that the lion was wet, the moisture dripping from his skin. He spread coolness all around him. To reach me, he must have swum across the big river near by.

It was autumn, cool winds were crossing the plain and they came fresh into my house that was still warm from the summer. They came from the high plateaux, or from the sea, and you could hear them, loud, in the night. That night I slept well. The lion, too, seemed to sleep quietly and well; towards morning, a warmth came from his body. In the twilight of morning I woke; the lion had got up and was standing in front of my house, where, when hours later I left my room, he was still standing, looking at the big river.

I beckoned to him and fed him with meat that I had in the house. I hoped that the lion would speak a few words to me now, but he was obstinately silent; true, he looked at me, from time to time, with his dark eyes, but it seemed he had nothing to tell me. Eventually, I gave up expecting him to speak to me. Often I talked to him in my language and I thought he showed signs of having understood me.

During the following nights, the lion slept beside me again. He spent the days near the house. Against the sun I saw him standing, black, on a hill and gazing in the direction of the sea; I saw him standing by the river and looking into the flowing water with his

head bowed down. Sometimes he would trot through my house or lie in the sun against its walls, or across the threshold; he moved slowly and quietly. I went about my work as usual and met him frequently during the day.

Once, when I was about to leave the house for quite some time, I said to the lion: You must decide whether, during my absence, which may last for several days, you wish to stay inside the house or outside it, for I want to lock the door. Instead of answering, the lion lay down on the threshold, and I knew that I did not need to lock my house. I went away and knew it for certain. When I came back, during the late September rainfalls, the lion was lying open-eyed just inside the door. When he saw me, he came out of the house. In the house everything was as I had left it. I thanked the lion and put out for him some meat which I had brought with me.

The lion often sat beside me when I stood fishing by the river. He sniffed at the fish I caught and looked at me attentively. He accompanied me through the forest, when I went to cut wood (there were no lions anywhere here), and every night he slept beside me. Then the lion left me. The first snow was in the air. One morning, in the twilight, he touched me as he got up, to wake me, and he looked at me. I took this as a sign that he was leaving, accompanied him to the door of my house, saw him walk in the rain to the river, saw him swim across the river and grow smaller and vanish in the curtain of rain on the plain beyond the river.

This was the only thing which happened that year in my house by the river. I cannot remember any other events, except for those connected with my work, unimportant ones. Winter came and went. The cold hung green and rustling over the river, which was free of ice because of its strong current. The sky stood glassily clear and hung full of snow. I visited a few people near by and farther off; other people visited me in my house. During this time I did not see the lion.

In the spring I repaired the roof of my house, replaced half the roof beams with new ones, put new floorboards and flagstones down, and went about my work as usual. The log rafts drifted down the big river to the sea. I still hoped that the lion would come again to visit my house, but I did not expect that he would. At the beginning

of the summer I saw a heavily cloaked man riding a donkey on the far side of the river, coming over the plain. On a long string an enormous red owl floated out in front of him, flying in circles high up in the wind. The rider was riding down the river. We shouted greetings and questions and answers across the river, but did not understand each other because of the considerable distance. It occurred to me that the rider might be somehow connected with the lion. When he had gone, I quickly forgot him. For several weeks, nothing happened; I went on doing my work. One evening in the summer there was a donkey standing on the other side of the river, holding a black fish in his mouth. Doubtless he could have caught the fish between his teeth while drinking. When the donkey saw me, he turned about with a few quick leaps and ran off across the plain. He took the fish with him in his mouth. Darkness was coming on, and I lost sight of the donkey.

Again for a long time nothing happened. The summer shone across the plain. I did my work, as usual, and had my pleasure in the warmth and the light. The windows and doors of my house stood wide open all night, so that a breeze could keep blowing through and drive away the heat which collected in the rooms during the daytime. Sometimes I thought of the lion and I thought of him with joy. But I did not see him again.

In the late summer, with the hot noon trembling over the plain, I saw the cloaked rider coming down the river near to my house. Tied to a string behind him walked the lion which had once been in my house. On the lion's back sat the enormous red owl, which was very much larger than the lion. The owl was holding the black fish in its beak. The lion seemed to be finding the owl heavy. He put his paws slowly down and walked with his head hung low. This little caravan came past very close to my house. Lion, owl and donkey looked at me, I was standing in the doorway of my house. The cloaked man turned his head and gave me a long stare with the white slits of his eyes. The lion looked at me the longest. I hoped that the group would stop at my house, perhaps to ask for some fresh water to drink, but it passed by and slowly vanished in the plain down the river. I stared after them for a long time. That day I missed doing any of my work.

I have never seen the group again. Neighbours who live miles away in the hills by the river also remembered having seen the procession that day. Nothing more happened. Sometimes I remember them; and on the days when I think of the lion, I often miss doing my usual work.

Translated by Christopher Middleton

Wolfgang Weyrauch

EZRA POUND

Ezra Pound,
in the middle of the Italian town
in a cage, exhibited,
stinking stone underneath him,
stinking horse blanket above him,
freezing, because it's winter,
shivering, with indifference
towards the American soldiers
who jeer at him, spit at him,
kick at him through the bars.

Ezra Pound,
observing the millipede
of boot, pistol, uniform,
U.S. millipede, U.S.S.R. millipede,
Nazi millipede, Nasser millipede,
millipedes without cause, effect,
without premiss, knowledge,
error, rejection of error,

Ezra Pound,
stinking, freezing, shivering,
thinking:
count yourselves lucky
that I'm not writing a poem,
for if I write a poem
and someone interferes
I kill him,
but I am not writing a poem,
cannot write a poem
because I'm asking myself
whether I was wrong,

in the millipede's enclosure,
in the shell of his trial, impugnement.

Translated by Michael Hamburger

Günter Eich

ORDER

Five courses,
tell them, the wooden girls,
for the penny beneath the tongue,
and the plates warmed.

You tried to keep us happy
with pheasant and sturgeon,
champagne and bouillabaisse.
Enough of that. Now serve
the dish that doesn't exist
and uncork the miracles.

Gladly then
we'll open our gobs
and pay
the bill that is due.

Translated by Michael Hamburger

TOO LATE FOR HOLDING BACK

We had tidied the house,
drawn the curtains,
had stores enough in the cellar,
coal and oil,
and between folds in our skin
had hidden capsuled death.

Through a crack in the door we saw the world:
a rooster with its head hacked off,
running across the yard.

That trampled on our hopes.
We hang our sheets from the balcony,
and we surrender.

Translated by Christopher Middleton

Manfred Bieler

WEDDING MARCH

The organist Irene Eiselt opens the music and with two fingers of her left hand she strikes a mordent that nobody can hear because Herr Senf, the churchwarden, hasn't yet turned the bellows on.

'Herr Senf,' Fräulein Eiselt calls, 'I need air.'

Senf is arranging the altar flowers and he throws a few pine branches into the aisle.

'We all need air,' he murmurs and looks up at the organ loft. The church is small and built of wood, cool in the summer, warm in the winter. On the right-hand wall there is a mosaic of the Sermon on the Mount. On the left, the breakfast at Emmaus or the Last Supper. If someone pulls the rope, the bells ring, but Senf doesn't pull the rope. The bridal pair are late. The bridal pair are lying in the sand and rubbing each other's backs with suntan lotion. Senf pulls a pine-needle from under his thumbnail, walks up the spiral staircase and sits down beside Fräulein Eiselt.

'The parson hasn't come yet either,' says Fräulein Eiselt, 'and why do people have to get married in such hot weather?'

'Heat is good for love,' says Senf and he sticks the pine-needle between F and F sharp in the once-marked octave. He has come closer to Fräulein Eiselt. Senf is wearing a black suit. Fräulein Eiselt is wearing a white blouse with a lace collar and a full black pleated skirt which hangs over the bench behind so that the pleats won't get pressed out. Senf lays his thick finger on the keys and plays soundlessly 'O sacred head sore wounded'. Fräulein Eiselt smiles, till Senf stops playing and curls his index finger over the manual as if it has fallen asleep.

'What are you doing?' asks Fräulein Eiselt, aghast.

'Tickletickle,' says Senf, 'I want to see if I can tickle the music out.'

'It's terribly hot,' says Fräulein Eiselt.

'If the air under my finger thickened, I could press on the keys with it and then it would look as if I'm doing magic.'

Fräulein Eiselt laughs. 'Press,' she says, and has a violent pain in her left shoulder, like rheumatism, or from lying too long on one side. She moves over a little. Senf holds both hands over the manual and presses.

'Ah,' sings Fräulein Eiselt, and she shudders.

Senf turns his head to her and is glad.

'Fine,' he says, and presses again.

'Ah,' sings Fräulein Eiselt, 'ah ah ah ah ah.'

She looks at Senf's thick fingers and sings. Senf's thick fingers gently tap against her forehead, stroke over her eyes, smooth the little wrinkles round her nose, claw her chin and undo the top button of her blouse.

'Ah ah ah,' sings Fräulein Eiselt.

Senf takes his hands out of the air and sticks them in his trouser-pockets. 'It's certainly time they came,' he says, 'we should have begun half an hour ago.'

'Maybe they changed their minds,' says Fräulein Eiselt. 'Would you mind turning round, Herr Senf?'

'Why?' asks Senf.

'Because I want to take my stockings off. I'm hot.'

'I see,' Senf says and he turns round. He looks at the breakfast at Emmaus or whatever it is, and he counts the pine-branches in the aisle. There are sixteen of them. Fräulein Eiselt steps out of her shoes, unhooks her stockings from her girdle and pulls them down her white legs. Then she takes her skirt under her arm and peels the girdle from her stomach. It makes a rustling and crackling and snapping sound and Senf counts the branches in the aisle once more. When he turns round again, Fräulein Eiselt is pulling her pleated skirt straight and breathing with her entire blouse.

'I feel better already,' she says and pushes her stockings into her handbag.

'Here you are,' says Senf and hands her the girdle.

'Oh yes,' says Fräulein Eiselt and she stows it away with the stockings.

'How long are we going to wait?' Senf asks. Fräulein Eiselt looks

at him. Her nostrils dilate, her eyes darken and she does a little virginish pout.

'I mean, they can't arrange a wedding, and then, just like that . . . ' says Herr Senf.

'They're people on vacation. It's the new age,' says Fräulein Eiselt. 'This lot, they see each other on the boat and sleep in the same hostel, then in adjoining rooms, the nights are cool, they lie in deckchairs and say: love.'

'But that's not love,' Senf says, 'that's lust.'

'Yes, that's what it is,' Fräulein Eiselt says, 'and our parson does make a fuss about it.'

Fräulein Eiselt hasn't put her shoes back on. She rests her feet on the pedals and rubs her big toes on their edges. Senf is sitting beside her and he leans so far forward that the blood rushes to his head. He slips off the bench, falls on one knee and grabs Fräulein Eiselt's right foot with his left hand. He keeps his thumb under the sole and his thick index finger across the instep. Senf kisses Fräulein Eiselt's toes with his lips.

'Take your jacket off,' says Fräulein Eiselt, as if nothing is happening. 'You must be awfully hot.' Senf stays on the floor between the pedals and the bench. Fräulein Eiselt helps him to take off his jacket. She is glad that he isn't wearing braces. Senf places Fräulein Eiselt's foot on the back of his neck.

'They may be here any minute,' Fräulein Eiselt says. She has put Senf's jacket under the bench.

'Then we'll lock up,' Senf says, and he fondles Fräulein Eiselt's leg with his thick fingers.

'But the parson has a key,' says Fräulein Eiselt.

'I'll kill the parson,' says Senf.

'Would you really do that for my sake?'

'Yes,' says Senf.

'Come back up on the bench,' Fräulein Eiselt implores him. Senf lifts his head with Fräulein Eiselt's foot and he looks up under her skirt. He kisses her left thigh and she opens her blouse. She's not wearing anything under it. Senf is about to raise his head higher, but the pleated skirt blocks his view up to Fräulein Eiselt's breasts. She pulls the skirt away from his head. That makes the hair fall over his

face. Senf has small eyes, his lips are trembling and his hands are on their way to Fräulein Eiselt's tuffet.

'Do you love me?' Fräulein Eiselt asks.

'No,' says Senf, 'I want to have you.'

'We can start now,' says the parson, he is standing in the aisle and looking up at the organ loft. Behind him walk the bridal pair, alone, in black and white, with rings and with flowers, sand in their ears and between their toes. 'Where is Senf?' calls the parson.

'I don't know,' says Fräulein Eiselt and takes Senf's head between her thighs.

'We must do without him,' the parson says, 'I'll turn on the bellows.'

'Have you any special wishes?' asks Fräulein Eiselt, doing up her blouse. The parson and Senf shake their heads. The bridal pair grow smaller and smaller and blur before Fräulein Eiselt's eyes.

'The usual, then,' she manages to say, then she places her fingers on the keys and starts the prelude.

'Dear Senf, dear Senf,' she's thinking, and she goes quiet.

The bridal pair walk to the altar. The parson opens a book, probably the Bible, and reads out something, which Fräulein Eiselt doesn't understand. She waits for the pause, the big pause, the long pause with the long breath, then she starts in with muted reedflute, coniform huntinghorn, with bourdon, trumpet and shawm, the wind is blowing through the organ, the wind is blowing over the pine branches and through the breakfast at Emmaus, and as the bridal pair, with the parson in front of them, walk to the portal, Fräulein Eiselt plays the wedding march with her bare feet and with one hand. The other hand is clasped around Senf's thick fingers.

Translated by Christopher Middleton

DALYA

Dalya was also a little girl with a short skirt and shining knees. But on the photograph above the candlestick she is also a girl with a young man in a flannel suit and she is walking with him across the planks which are a pier or a terrace by the sea. She laughs but she is

laughing because she is being photographed or because the young man beside her is tweaking her arm. Behind them a girl-friend or acquaintance is walking, she is laughing as if she had called the photographer over to photograph Dalya with the young man in the flannel suit. Dalya is also dead. On the photograph beside the mother of God she is also dead in a white shroud. She has her hands folded, the layer-out folded her hands. Herr Todorow closed her eyes. Dalya in her short skirt is also standing by a fence, a cemetery, and her right knee presses against the new concrete pillar, and Dalya is also lying in the meadow with the young man in the flannel suit. But beside him Dalya is lying in a skyblue coffin on a white cloth, and Herr Todorow and the priest put the gilt lid on the coffin and the driver comes and helps them to push the coffin on to the carriage. Dalya is also riding her bicycle through the town. For Dalya today Herr Todorow has lit all the candles.

Have this cigarette, says Herr Todorow. This cigarette is twenty-five years old. Has this cigarette lost its aroma? This cigarette is called a Diplomat. In the box, look, there's a picture of the Bulgarian king. A child's picture.

Dalya is dancing tonight between two imported palm-trees. Dalya is also a dancer, holding tightly to her dress. When she falls down, Herr Todorow closes her eyes for her, and the driver on the funeral carriage folds his hands over his ponies and the priest puts his hat back on and puts up his umbrella to stop the rain from falling on his cigarette. He smokes a cigarette which is twenty-five years old and has lost its aroma. The young man in the flannel suit, who is he dancing with now? I know: it is the girl-friend who called the photographer over. The layer-out has closed all the eyes in this street. Herr Todorow goes to get his shoes polished on Friday evening. He walks into the shop on the Uliza Positano. Dalya is walking in the roof garden. Frau Todorow is going to the dentist. Herr Todorow is sitting in a high chair between an officer and an old acquaintance.

Have this cigarette, says Herr Todorow to his old acquaintance. Dalya is sitting on the railing of the roof-garden. The officer holds out his right boot to the shoe-cleaner. On all the chairs in the shoe-cleaning shop sit big grown-up men who are smoking and listening to Turkish music from the loudspeaker. Dalya is a schoolgirl with a

highschool cap and a ribbon in her pigtail. She is holding a certificate in her hand. Dalya is sitting on the railing of the roof-garden as the anti-aircraft guns open fire. The officer tells Herr Todorow the calibre of the anti-aircraft guns. The priest gives the driver a punch on the ear because he has not shared the tip with him. The Bulgarian king does not know if he is in the right-hand pocket or the left-hand pocket. The Bulgarian king does not care.

Dalya comes down from the roof. She stumbles a little on the stairs, but the layer-out has already put a wreath on her, and when Herr Todorow and the priest push the coffin lid over them she has forgotten everything. Dalya laughs all the way from the fourth floor to the ground floor. The anti-aircraft guns crackle. Dalya is standing at the school festival under the school flag and singing. Opposite her a young man in a flannel suit and running shorts is standing and singing.

The shoe-cleaner notices that the soles of Herr Todorow's shoes are a little loose. The old acquaintance jokingly compares the size of Herr Todorow's shoes with the calibre of the anti-aircraft guns. The officer waves his polished boot in time with the Turkish music. Dalya is going to the young man in the flannel suit. He lives in the Uliza Zar Boris. Dalya runs quickly like the driver's ponies when they trot the carriage into the coach-house. Then they eat oats and their eyes close and they wish they could one day trot to a wedding. Dalya is a white bride, a grey. She is lying in bed with her wreath. The bridegroom is dead and not dancing with the girl-friend. The young man in the flannel suit has injured himself. The officer with the polished boots trod on his face. Dalya came too late. In the doorway of the young man in the flannel suit the officer is standing and smoking a cigarette with the picture of the Bulgarian king. An aromatic cigarette. A cigarette of some calibre, says Herr Todorow's old acquaintance and takes his hat off as he passes the officer. Herr Todorow is having his soles tacked on. He sits in the high chair wearing his blue darned socks.

Frau Todorow has come home from the dentist. Dalya has been standing in the window and waving to the cars. The officer gives the driver a generous tip if he'll whip his ponies up and take the young man in the flannel suit under the ground. The driver must share the

tip with the priest. The black ponies pull the bridegroom into the forest. Dalya is standing in the window and waving to them. She laughs and laughs, as if she were looking at Herr Todorow come running out of the shoe-cleaning shop with his wife but without his shoes on. Dalya is crying as Herr Todorow lays her on the bed, on her steel tube bed. The next day Dalya is laughing again. Then she is dead. On the photograph beside the mother of God she is dead in a white shroud. The layer-out has folded her hands.

Herr Todorow gives the driver, the priest and me a cigarette which is twenty-five years old and has lost its aroma.

Translated by Christopher Middleton

Paul Celan

MATIÈRE DE BRETAGNE

Gorselight, yellow, the slopes
fester to heaven, the thorn
woos the wound, bells ring
in there, it is evening, the void
rolls its oceans to worship,
the sail of blood is aiming for you.

Dry, stranded
the stream-bed behind you, reed-choked
its moment, above,
by the star, the milky
creeks gossip in mud, stone-borer
below, bunched, gapes at blue, a shrub
of transience, beautiful, admits
welcoming your memory.

(Did you know me,
hands? I took
the forked way you showed, my mouth
spat its macadam, I walked, my time,
ambling patrols, cast its shadow – did you know me?)

Hands, the wound
wooed by the thorn, bells
ring, hands, the void, its oceans,
hands, in the gorselight, the
sail of blood
is aiming for you.

You
you teach
you teach your hands
you teach your hands you teach
you teach your hands
sleep.

PSALM

No-one remoulds us out of earth and clay,
no-one speaks to our dust.
No-one.

Praise be to you, No-one.
For your sake we
shall flower.
Toward
you.

Nothing
we were, we are, we shall
be, flowering:
the nothing-rose, the
no-one's rose.

With
a pistil radiant as soul,
a filament waste as heaven,
a flower red
from the crimson word we sang
over, O over
the thorn.

Translated by Christopher Middleton

Ingeborg Bachmann

TO THE SUN

More beautiful than the remarkable moon and her noble light,
More beautiful than the stars, the famous medals of night,
Much more beautiful than the fiery entrance a comet makes,
And called to a part far more splendid than any other planet's
Because daily your life and my life depend on it, is the sun.

Beautiful sun that rises, his work not forgotten,
And completes it, most beautifully in summer, when a day
Evaporates on the coast, and effortlessly mirrored the sails
Pass through your sight, till you tire and cut short the last.

Without the sun even art takes the veil again,
You cease to appear to me, and the sea and the sand,
Lashed by shadows, take refuge under my eyelids.

Beautiful light, that keeps us warm, preserves us, marvellously
makes sure
That I see again and that I see you again!

Nothing more beautiful under the sun than to be under the sun . . .

Nothing more beautiful than to see the stick in water and the bird
above,
Pondering his flight, and, below, the fishes in shoals,

Coloured, moulded, brought into the world with a mission of
light,
And to see the radius, the square of a field, my landscape's
thousand angles

And the dress you have put on, And *your* dress, bell-shaped and
blue!

Beautiful blue, in which peacocks walk and bow,
Blue of far places, the zones of joy with weathers that suit my mood,
Blue chance on the horizon! And my enchanted eyes
Dilate again and blink and burn themselves sore.

Beautiful sun, to whom dust owes great admiration yet,
Not for the moon, therefore, and not for the stars, and not
Because night shows off with comets, trying to fool me,
But for your sake, and endlessly soon, and for you above all
I shall lament the inevitable loss of my sight.

Translated by Michael Hamburger

Reinhard Lettau

THE OBSTACLE COURSE

Mr Faber stood at his window, glad to see the day growing light outside. The sky was not cloudless. In the east, a lazy, yellowish sun was preparing to show itself altogether.

Mr Faber waited for that moment, raising the collar of his dressing-gown. Behind him in the room, he heard the wood crackling in his fireplace, the fresh wood he had placed on top of last evening's ashes. He loved the morning, the few hours he spent with an empty stomach before breakfast, before the day claimed its due.

The night had brought colder weather, as one could conclude from the thread of smoke that was rising from the chimney next door. The old snow that had been shrinking a little every noon during the past weeks was frozen this morning into definitive patterns. The man whom Faber had noticed outside his house had thrust both hands deep into the pockets of his fur coat. 'What is he waiting for?' Faber asked himself. The man's attitude had something of readiness about it.

Faber stepped back into the still half-dark room. Distractedly he abandoned himself to the spectacle of the fire that was reaching out more vigorously. The white skin of the birch logs became visible behind the flames rising silkily to the flue. Faber began rearranging the wood with the tongs to make it burn more evenly. Not for reasons of economy – one could rightly call him a good manager, a moderate man – did he dispense with the regular service of a house-boy, but because such an occupation within his own quiet house put him in an auspicious mood and supplied him with an inner strength from which to draw his day's work.

Had he seen right? And if he had seen right, then why was it reaching his consciousness only now, as he knelt down once more to feed another log to the fire? Why did his eyes only now acknowledge the image of the man out there in the snow, in front of his

house, imitating every single step Faber felt compelled to take on the inside?

Tentatively he turned towards the dining-room. The man outside followed in the same direction, removing his hands from his pockets, probably for the purpose of greater mobility. Faber froze in his tracks, the stranger stood motionless. Faber forced himself to take a single giant step, the other merely flexed his knees, as though indicating that these momentary attempts at walking were not the real issue. Faber ran through the foyer and all the way down to the kitchen, but when he came to an abrupt halt, grabbing a chair to brake himself, the stranger's face was already staring at him from the other side of the window-pane. Again his arms were buried elbow-deep in his roomy pockets.

Faber ran through all his rooms at a rapid pace. First he crossed the living-room that led to the dining-room. Then, without stopping, diagonally through the living-room out into the foyer, which had wide windows, and from there to the kitchen. Without stopping he bounded sideways into a pantry that led to a stairway. He climbed the steps in an instant. They brought him up to a stage-type platform that permitted entrance to his workroom that led – after leaping down a few steps – to the corridor that took him back to the living-room. The corridor provided a variant as it was completely closed in on all sides and had probably concealed him from his competitor. But coming out of this passageway he found the stranger already waiting under one of the living-room windows. He'd catch sight of him only for a split second as the other man threw himself forward like a relay runner to start off again in the same direction; when Faber reached the next room they'd be running neck-and-neck for a second or two. Then the man outside, whose course was not obstructed by furniture or the crevice of a narrow door, would immediately be yards ahead. From one room to the next he could see the stranger always set for another round. Could it be that outside, all around the house, identically clad team-mates stood waiting, ready to run, so that each of them had only to cover the length of a room, ready to drive him on and on for ever?

Heading once again towards the hidden corridor, Faber stopped abruptly and turned. He ran diagonally through the study, over the

pantry steps, down into the kitchen towards the foyer, and from there into the dining-room. Only then did he perceive the gentleman outside, but from the back, turning the corner of the house. Now he might miss him for the duration of a round or two, on his flight towards one of the rooms, see only the coat-tail of the man rushing past. If he fell into a walking step, he'd sometimes see the stranger shoot past several times, on the outside, before moderating his speed to a trot, or stopping altogether.

But if the stranger sprinted away once more, doubling his speed, Faber couldn't help doing the same. Again he'd race and leap through the familiar rooms, around tight corners, up short flights of stairs, over platforms. Arms pressed to his sides, coat-tails flying higher, the eyes blurrily perceived the same image: the stranger posted here and here and here under a window, always ready to overtake him.

Who had shoved the glass into Faber's hand that he was draining avidly in the secrecy of the corridor? Hadn't there been guests sitting in the living-room the last time he shot through it, guests following his course with widening eyes? Shouldn't they be taken care of? Was this an endurance race? How would he be able to do his work?

One might – Faber reflected while running – remove unnecessary furniture, roll up the carpet, put away the vases which his heavy tread caused to tinkle here and there; clear the arena. Draperies in which he became entangled because he calculated a turn badly, or because he had let himself be distracted by looking after his competitor too long, should be taken down, and door-sills were obstacles too. And what was the use of chairs? Supposing one abandoned one's heavy morning coat, one's slippers? And what purpose – Faber kept running – was served by the records and documents that kept piling up in his workroom? Didn't they fly in all directions at his breathless approach?

One could tear down the walls, install a merry-go-round in the empty space, let oneself be spun around to music. Or else an existence under the window-sills. An existence not unlike the previous one, except that one would not be able to stand up straight without being seen from outside and challenged anew. Why not lie in front of the fireplace instead of standing or sitting?

What about asking the gentleman in, to decide the race inside the house? Did one have to fear that, while such an invitation was being called from the stoop, the stranger might slip furtively into the house and bolt all the doors: the new master of the house? Had perhaps someone else tricked him out of house and home in just that manner?

Mr Faber pondered – while flying through the foyer, bounding up the stairs to the second floor, to the attic. Nor was the idea to join the stranger in order to spy with him on other houses to be discarded. Like ghosts the familiar rooms weaved past him. Siphon bottles and glasses tinkled, a curtain flew high in the breeze of his passing. His goal: to run at his own heels.

He didn't notice that it was getting dark, that his path grew harder and harder, that no one was any longer running alongside him outside.

Translated by Ursule Molinaro

Karl Krolow

FROM THE LIFE OF A TABLE

At the birth of a table,
a chisel drops from the air.

Later he saves
a wine's life
from being spilt.

On long poles
dreams borne by: -
souls of drinkers
who died at him,
as the carafes whispered.

Nights awake, making him feel
the weight of hourglasses.

Silence
is laughter's cancer,
making the meals come
sooner and sooner to an end.

When the lightning struck him,
the axes mourned that had been waiting
for his old age.

VIOLENCE

Out of hiding it came,
Raised dead metal to life.

The last negotiators
Peeled off their gloves
And left. Their smiles
A coinage withdrawn.

Out of hiding it came.
The place it looked at
Is lost.
The doors fly open.
The windows get smashed.
Ashes and mortar
Scatter into eyes.
Lips shut
Under thumps from fists.
The squalid night holds ready
Its attacks and black minutes.
Soon the hearts
Will stop beating
Behind the curtain of rust.

Out of hiding it came.
It will manhandle us.
We may still leave the house
And gaze into the sky of bulbs.
But in the suburbs
The slogans are posted,
Soon the streetfighting
Will reach us.
Soon we shall be alone
With the muzzles of guns.
Which of us shall be
The first to fall forward
Across his table?

Translated by Christopher Middleton

Christa Reinig

MY POSSESSIONS

I have a coat to put in my jacket pocket
a pocket coat

I have a radio to put in my jacket pocket
a pocket radio

I have a bible to put in my jacket pocket
a pocket bible

I have no such thing as a jacket with pockets
no jacket pocket

I have a schnapps bottle with twelve glasses for me
and all my uncles and aunts

I have a coffee pot with four cups for me
and my three best friends

I have a chessboard with black and white pieces for me
and a man friend

I have no friends at all to invite
nobody

I have a sky without end over my head
under which to find myself

I have a town full of streets without end
in which to meet myself

I have a song without end without end
in which to breathe in and out

I have no more than a grass blade between two paving stones
no more to be alive

Translated by Christopher Middleton

YOU HAVEN'T HEARD

Of progress not another word
of work and pensions and percents
I speak – heroes, you haven't heard –
for the asocial elements

For letching matloes waifs and strays
for gipsies dreamers goofs of love
for working men who've had enough
for jailbirds oddballs refugees

For the hoodlum suicide hooligan
for whores in houses where the lamps are low
and for the drunks who'll never know
it's a lump of star they're trampling on

I speak my words as madmen may
for me for others also blind
for all who've never found the way
or had a home to find

Translated by Christopher Middleton

Günter Grass

THE SALT LAKE LINE *

Music and effects: the tune of 'Casey Jones' should be identifiable as an opening theme.

NARRATOR: In the middle of the picture, rusted and overgrown, an ancient railway engine is seen with its tender. On it Krudewil and Pempelfort are standing, the one inside the cabin looking out, the other on the tender. For them, as they gaze ahead, the derelict vehicle is moving at speed. In the green landscape behind them cows are grazing. In the foreground, a little to one side, the painter Kotschenreuther sits at his easel. Axel, in countryman's costume, is watching him at work.

AXEL: Going to be a ship, hm?

KOTSCH: You've got it exactly. A frigate.

AXEL: I'm not saying a word now. Don't have much to do with such things, the likes of us.

KOTSCH: What's on your mind, Axel? Out with it.

AXEL: Well, it's you here, the Professor – makes one wonder. Every morning you come here, look the cows over, take measurements, all as if you knew something about cattle and were going to buy a heifer, and then, and then –

* *Translator's Note:* The original title of Grass's play is a quotation from *John Maynard*, a ballad by Theodor Fontane, a nineteenth century German recitation piece about a Lake Erie steamer captain who dies a hero's death. As this poem is unknown in English, I transposed the whole context for radio purposes from Buffalo to San Francisco, the terminal of another famous journey, that of the engine driver Casey Jones, who also perished with his vehicle. Not only is the tune of this ballad immediately evocative to English ears, but it serves also for the sister ballad *Steamboat Bill* who met a similar end. Thus by introducing allusions to this tune in his music, Humphrey Searle, the composer for the radio production, was able to underline the comic ambivalence of land and water in Grass's play. The textual changes involved were very slight. The narration is based on Grass's own stage directions.

KOTSCH: Well?

AXEL: Then you make it into a ship.

KOTSCH: A frigate.

AXEL: A sailing ship, any road.

NARRATOR: Here Kotschenreuther gets up and compares his picture with the landscape behind.

KOTSCH: You must be more adaptable, Axel. Plunge right in like a good swimmer, strike a way through the old values, and then – new perspectives, sensitive instruments, quick-hearing apparatus, virgin territory – above all you must throw out all these ridiculous labels. Cow, ship, professor, buttercup. Illusions all of them, complexes. If you call your cow a sailing-ship, or even a steamer, do you suppose she cares?

AXEL: You may be right. But – the eye? When I *see* now, and see there the cow and here a ship . . .

KOTSCH: That's just your mistake, Axel. You look at things too much with the intellect. Keep it simple, begin at the beginning. In the beginning there was the ship. Out of that came the cow, out of the cow chess, then they built the Pyramids, after that came journalism, and with it the railway – who can say what'll be tomorrow? Bring me the sail-juice, I'm thirsty.

AXEL: You mean milk, Professor.

KOTSCH: Call it what you like, so long as it's white as Moby Dick.

[Music: 'Moby Dick' theme briefly.]

NARRATOR: Axel thereupon departs and the painter sets to work with concentration on the engine. Meanwhile Krudewil gives full steam –

[Music and effects: melancholy howling and noises of a ramshackle engine in motion.]

PEMPELFORT: You must be more careful with the fuel, it won't last much longer.

KRUDEWIL: Then I'll stoke you into the boiler.

PEMPEL: You can't be serious.

KRUDEWIL: Think I'm joking? I'll cut you up nicely into little bits, put you out to dry, then up on the shovel and in with you, into the boiler. *[Laughs and grinds his teeth.]*

PEMPEL: Please, please don't grind your teeth so – and drive slower, we really must be more economical.

KRUDEWIL [*furiously*]: Who's driving this engine, you or me?

PEMPEL: The line here's in bad condition, we must stop to refuel.

KRUDEWIL: Not on your life. Come on, my beauty.

NARRATOR: And Krudewil gave full steam.

[*Music and effects: steam.*]

PEMPEL: The last shovelful. [*Pleading.*] Krudewil, I beg you, Krudewil.

KRUDEWIL: Now pull yourself together, Pempelfort, I'm warning you. Makes one sick to hear you. Why man, thirty minutes more and we're in 'Frisco, all our sorrows at an end. And then there'll be ringing of bells and rubbing of lamps –

PEMPEL: On my knees I beg you –

KRUDEWIL: – changing of shirts, anointing of breasts –

PEMPEL: If you would only listen.

KRUDEWIL: – paring of nails and oiling of kneecaps. Then there'll be laughter, I'm telling you, laughter.

PEMPEL: I really am looking forward to it, Krudewil. But just one little stop, just three minutes. A good place like this, it would be a crime to pass it by. The cows mean well by us.

[*Music and effects: the engine is braked and clanks to a stop.*]

KRUDEWIL: All right. But not a second more.

NARRATOR: As Krudewil brings the engine to a stop, Pempelfort jumps off the tender and begins collecting cowpats with a shovel.

KRUDEWIL: Terrible hole, this. Stinks of butter. Enough to give one jaundice.

PEMPEL: Don't be unfair now, the cows're providing for us.

KRUDEWIL: 'Course the fuel would have lasted out.

PEMPEL: Never! I'm not giving you orders, mind. You're the driver, you know what you're doing up in front there. But there are things I know, too, I've got my place, too.

KRUDEWIL [*contemptuously*]: Fireman!

PEMPEL: Yes, fireman. And I've got an eye for how much and how long and if and when fuel must be taken.

KRUDEWIL: Okay, okay. You're a dandy fireman. But now get on with it. We've got our timetable to think of.

- PEMPEL: Just this one then and this. Lovely cowpats, dry as tinder.
- NARRATOR: At this moment Pempelfort notices the painter Kotschenreuther at his easel and walks over to have a look.
- PEMPEL: Are you a painter?
- KOTSCH [*angrily*]: Don't interrupt, come back another time. I'm just in the middle of the rigging.
- KRUDEWIL: Come on, Pempelfort, leave the man in peace. You've still got those spikes to hammer in.
- PEMPEL: All right, all right, here I go. [*Hums 'Casey Jones'.*]
 [*Music and effects: he hums 'Casey Jones' and hammers in time to the tune.*]
- PEMPEL: There!
 [*With a final blow. Engine whistle blown, steam given, engine clanks into motion.*]
- KRUDEWIL: We're off.
- PEMPEL: Wait, wait, give us a chance.
- NARRATOR and Music: No sooner has Pempelfort hammered the last dogspike back into the sleeper than Krudewil gives steam and sets the engine in motion. As before its wheels turn but it does not advance. Pempelfort seems to himself to be running alongside trying to catch hold but in fact he is only marking time at the double. He stumbles and falls none the less, jumps to his feet again, and with a heave is up and sitting breathless on the tender.
- PEMPEL [*gasping for breath*]: You shouldn't do it, Krudewil. You know what my nerves are like. Excitement doesn't agree with me. I do the best I can. It's five long days we've had this engine under steam. Only got me to thank for it, only me.
- KRUDEWIL [*laughing*]: Okay, Pempelfort, you've done a good job.
- PEMPEL: And at that I'd much rather have stayed in the Navy. What a fine ship she was! And all that fresh air. But what must you do? Mutiny, and do a bunk.
- KRUDEWIL: You could have stayed. Nothing to prevent you. Scrubbing decks, eating ship's biscuit, sleeping before the mast – pipe down, will you? Don't like it here at all, this bit of country. Cows, nothing but cows.

PEMPEL: You're right, there's a good few head of cattle here. Who milks them all, I wonder?

KRUDEWIL: What do we care? We have our destination - 'Frisco. And when we get there, you'll see something.

PEMPEL: What shall I see, Krudewil?

KRUDEWIL: Questions! It'll be a game, I'm telling you straight - we'll take soundings and full sail ahead. Not for nothing you'll find, our time at sea, serving God and country. It's truth I'm telling you. [*Laughs horribly.*]

PEMPEL: It frightens me when you laugh like that. You've got something up your sleeve.

KRUDEWIL: You bet your life.

PEMPEL: Something bad?

KRUDEWIL: Depends how you take it.

PEMPEL: Tell me the truth. I couldn't bear it if after all this journey, just when we'd reached our destination, you were to go off the rails again. We shouldn't have done it, you know, just leaving her flat like that.

KRUDEWIL: A woman skipper!

PEMPEL: Frigate-Captain.

KRUDEWIL: She can be an Admiral for all I care, it's not to be endured either way. A woman's place is in bed, or in a rocking-chair using her crochet-hook. [*Laughs.*]

PEMPEL: Don't laugh that way, or -

KRUDEWIL: Or what?

PEMPEL: Or I - I'll leave you.

KRUDEWIL: You me?

PEMPEL: Yes I will.

KRUDEWIL: Just a minute.

NARRATOR: Krudewil glances at the pressure gauge.

KRUDEWIL: We must be doing a good 60 - 60 m.p.h. - turn that into knots and ask yourself -

PEMPEL: It makes no difference. If you're up to something bad, don't count me in. But if you'll promise me now, this evening as soon as we arrive, to go to bed, as is only right and proper after such an exhausting journey -

KRUDEWIL: Shut your trap, will you? Another peep out of you -

PEMPEL: So – it's got to be.

NARRATOR: Pempelfort hoists himself on to the edge of the tender.

KRUDEWIL: Hey, none of that. You stay where you are, mate. He's off his nut.

PEMPEL: Oh no, no. Quite in his right mind, Pempelfort is, couldn't be more so. I've seen through you, that's what it is, and I've got an idea already how it'll all end with you. You'll have a guilty turn and there'll be blood on your hands – Krudewil, you give me the horrors.

NARRATOR and Music: And Pempelfort makes as if to jump off the tender. Quick as lightning Krudewil clambers out of the cab and catches hold of him. The two men wrestle and fall from the tender. With a running jump they are on again, still struggling together. The engine puts on more steam and blows its whistle. At this the painter Kotschenreuther springs to his feet, snatching up a sheet of paper and a lump of charcoal.

KOTSCH: Haha, what do I see? Jacob wrestling with the Angel. Quick, a sketch, this is too good to miss. No one has ever found such a subject, let alone got it down on paper – breathing actuality, timely and yet timeless. It must be drawn – transcendence between foremast and mainmast, to say nothing of the stiff nor'wester, an all-in match, Jacob wrestling with the Angel.

NARRATOR: While Kotschenreuther sets to work on his sketch, Krudewil has got the upper hand of Pempelfort and holds him, unresisting.

KRUDEWIL: You won't do that again, now? Go off and leave me flat? Your best friend?

PEMPEL: Only if *you* promise. Hold up your hand and swear. Swear! That you'll never leave me alone again.

KRUDEWIL: By our engine's forward speed, I swear it.

NARRATOR: As Krudewil stands up and raises his hand to take the oath, both he and Pempelfort assume the attitude of men caught in the wind of a train's motion.

PEMPEL: That you'll go to bed the moment you arrive.

KRUDEWIL: By the gauge of the 'Frisco track, I swear it.

PEMPEL: That you'll say your prayers first.

KRUDEWIL: By God who sets the points, I swear it.

PEMPEL: That you'll never, never again go to the folk there in those low dives.

KRUDEWIL: But they're absolutely harmless.

PEMPEL: No, keep your hand raised and swear. Never again to those low dives.

KRUDEWIL: By all the rail-joints and milestones, by all the swallows and telegraph poles, by all the unintelligible signals – My God, it's against us!

NARRATOR and Effects: Krudewil dashes to the cab and applies the brake.

KRUDEWIL: That was a lucky escape. Could have been serious. I'll never do that again, at such a speed.

PEMPEL: An oath is an oath, shipmate, you're moored fast now, bow and stern.

KRUDEWIL: Cut out the seafaring language, would you mind? There, spikes to hammer.

PEMPEL: I've just done them.

KRUDEWIL: Now, now.

PEMPEL: All right, if you say so.

NARRATOR and Effects: Pempelfort takes the hammer, climbs down from the tender and sets to work again on the track.

[*Hammering.*]

PEMPEL: But no more of this starting off again without a word, mind, and me having to run after. Understand, Krudewil?

KRUDEWIL: I'll send you a postcard.

PEMPEL: Okay, make fun of me. But one day, when I'm not around any more, you'll realize what manner of man it was you ill-treated and abused, then you'll be sorry, but too late, Krudewil, too late.

NARRATOR: And Pempelfort wanders off into the field and starts picking flowers.

KRUDEWIL [*in an affected voice*]: Look at the poor fellow, nothing'll do now to cheer him up but flowers and a rather bewildered butterfly. [*Calling out.*] Only fifteen minutes more to 'Frisco, Pempelfort, and you can strew the platform with flowers and give a bunch of them dandelions to the station-master.

NARRATOR: Krudewil lights his pipe while Pempelfort, flower

picking, once more approaches Kotschenreuther, who is still painting away at his easel.

PEMPEL [*astonished*]: Well, I'm blowed. Another painter.

KOTSCH [*crossly*]: What do you mean, 'another', young man?

PEMPEL: Can't be ten minutes back, we had to stop on an open stretch because we ran out of fuel, and who did I see?

KOTSCH: Joan of Arc, I shouldn't wonder.

PEMPEL: Wrong. In a field just like this there was a man sitting just like you, painting.

NARRATOR: Kotschenreuther jumps to his feet.

KOTSCH: What's that you're saying? Ha, what was this fellow painting? Flowers no doubt and butterflies?

PEMPEL: That's just it. Bit off-hand the gentleman was, wouldn't let me look. And I'd have liked to see it, too.

KOTSCH: Hm. What size of painting? Big? And what was his palette like?

PEMPEL: Blue, a lot of blue. Keen gentleman, he was too, very keen. Said he was just starting on the rigging. Seascape painter, maybe.

KOTSCH: I thought so! Drellman! The nerve! Old copy-cat. But just you wait, Drellman, my lad, I'll clean your brushes for you.

NARRATOR: And Kotschenreuther begins packing up canvas, easel and paints.

KOTSCH: Stealing my ideas right under my nose. The wrestling match too, I bet. Drellman the mid-West Wonder. And as for avantguardism – not a glimmer of a notion. Here, you, here's a name to remember. Kotschenreuther. A man centuries ahead of his time you'll find. Try making a date with me, my boy, and you'll miss it by years.

NARRATOR and Effects: [*Music, steam and 'Moby Dick'.*] Heavily laden, Kotschenreuther departs under the gaze of the astonished Pempelfort, who, however, soon has to be off on his own account, at the double too, for without warning Krudewil gives steam.

KRUDEWIL: Thar she blows, we're off!

NARRATOR: Once again Pempelfort takes a running jump on to the tender.

PEMPEL: I'm through!

KRUDEWIL: What? All in the day's work for a fireman. We'll be there soon, time enough then to grumble and complain – shovel on more fuel.

[*Effects: Shovelling.*]

PEMPEL: I'll never believe another word you say. You're a slob. You promised, swore to me, by all the unguarded level-crossings. But I'm wise to you now. Once we're there, I'll be on my own again I can see, have to bolt the doors and bar the windows. You scare me, Krudewil.

KRUDEWIL: How you talk. Can't you take a joke? Think of the life we lead. Find me a better, that's all I ask. Always on rails, what could be nicer than that? No seaways, no cliffs, no scurvy, no bogeyman. Always riding ahead, straight and smooth, Dallas today, 'Frisco tomorrow – though I could wish the country hereabouts could have a new idea occasionally. A bit of desert, say, bare as you like, a few empty food cans to port and starboard. Instead of these cows and daisies all the time. Stop sniffing them flowers.

PEMPEL: You're losing your feeling for nature.

KRUDEWIL: I need a change.

PEMPEL: Oh yes, I know. Blasphemy, smut, fainting fits, low life, unworthy situations, froth, swearing, vomit, sticky pleasures and no regrets.

KRUDEWIL: What else can I go for? An engine-driver, you know, is thrown back on his own resources.

PEMPEL: Excuses, you're a nice one to talk. Engine-driver, and you've never driven a passenger train in your life, only goods trains.

KRUDEWIL [*chanting*]: The freight train –

[*Music picks up here perhaps and out again.*]

– the old freight train will take you there and back again – Shall we?

PEMPEL: You're changing the subject, Krudewil.

KRUDEWIL: Come on, only three verses. I'll begin.

NARRATOR: And Krudewil hoists himself on to the roof of the cab and sits astride it.

PEMPEL: If it were a sea shanty now and the anchor to weigh.
 KRUDEWIL and Music [*singing or chanting in rhythm*]:

The freight train, the old freight train.
 They blow out one another's light
 And sell their cottage to the cat.
 Each turns to each in spitefulness,
 They interpenetrate at chess,
 They sit in one another's laps,
 Like little Euclids bridge their gaps,
 Lovely bridges for the old freight train
 To thunder across and back again.

PEMPELFORT:

They make proposals each to each
 And gravitate from speech to speech.
 With hindsight, foresight, oversight
 They blow out one another's light.
 They're brachycephalous to a man
 On the freight train, the old freight train.

KRUDEWIL:

They take in one another's work,
 They have the honour, sir, to be,
 They keep an armour-plated till
 To guard the great vacuity.
 They speak of one another ill,
 Proudly at platform's edge they stand
 To welcome all with upraised hand
 On the freight train, the old freight train.

PEMPELFORT:

An omnibus, an omnibus,
 With boredom for a passenger.
 The motorcar without much fuss
 Can overtake the river.
 Each is the other's van-courier,
 They sit before and after beer,
 They blow out one another's light,
 A rampant beast stalks through the night –
 The freight train, the old freight train.

KRUDEWIL: Will take you there and back again. [*Laughs.*]

[*Effects: Blows the engine whistle, and suddenly pulls on the brakes.*]

[*Music into brakes.*]

KRUDEWIL: Well, I'll be blowed.

PEMPEL: What is it, why've you stopped?

KRUDEWIL: There's somebody lying there.

PEMPEL: Where?

NARRATOR: They both look out of the window of the cab.

PEMPEL: Where?

KRUDEWIL: On the track.

PEMPEL: God help us. Tied hand and foot most likely, knocked out most likely, a gag in his mouth most likely, choking to death.

KRUDEWIL: Don't much care for this neighbourhood. Not safe.

Them cows, nothing but a plant if you ask me. Get a move on, then, go and have a look.

PEMPEL: Me?

KRUDEWIL: Who else?

PEMPEL: But, but . . .

KRUDEWIL: Make it sharp, you don't expect me to go, the driver?

PEMPEL: Supposing something stirs and they come at me?

KRUDEWIL: Here, take the pistol. That time, you know, I brought it away with me. What's a frigate-captain want with a pistol?

PEMPEL: She will have noticed it.

KRUDEWIL: Let her! It's doing a good job for us now. Step on it, I'll give you fire cover.

NARRATOR: Pempelfort departs once more.

KRUDEWIL: Ought to make sure by rights, and knock them all off, now or later when we're moving.

[*Music: Faint snatch of 'Moby Dick'.*]

NARRATOR: Pempelfort returns.

PEMPEL: Krudewil.

KRUDEWIL: Back already?

PEMPEL: It's a woman.

KRUDEWIL: Pretty?

PEMPEL: Stop fooling around with that pistol.

KRUDEWIL: I asked a question. Is she pretty?

PEMPEL: I don't know, only saw her from a distance.

KRUDEWIL: Go and have a proper look. And don't come back till you have.

PEMPEL: Hadn't *you* better? You're more of an expert.

KRUDEWIL: Get a move on, I said.

PEMPEL [*going*]: Okay, okay, stop pointing that pistol.

NARRATOR: Pempelfort departs once more.

KRUDEWIL: Afraid of a woman. Struck all of a dither by a bit of skirt. Just a lovely woollen or silken bag bursting with woman, and he – here he comes. What a face. Did she bite you or pull your little shirt out? [*Laughs loudly, then breaks off nervously.*] Hey, Pempelfort, stop your teeth chattering, pull yourself together, mate.

PEMPEL: It's her.

KRUDEWIL: Blimey. Old Frigate?

PEMPEL: Herself. She looks fair put out, too.

KRUDEWIL: In uniform?

PEMPEL: Every stitch of canvas. Smoking cigars, what's more.

KRUDEWIL: Two?

PEMPEL: Three, alternately.

KRUDEWIL: Maybe she isn't even angry with us.

PEMPEL: Then you don't know her.

KRUDEWIL: Did she see you?

PEMPEL: I don't think so.

KRUDEWIL: Hm. I just had an idea.

[*Music: Faint but sinister, into engine whistle after 'engine' below.*]

PEMPEL: Krudewil, you're not thinking of –

KRUDEWIL: Why not? Could well have been, well let's say, bad visibility. Ground mist, darkness, a snowstorm.

PEMPEL: Krudewil.

KRUDEWIL: What's wrong? Normally I couldn't have braked at all.

PEMPEL: But you did brake.

KRUDEWIL: It was careless of me. Come on, full steam ahead.

NARRATOR: Krudewil climbs on to the engine, but Pempelfort stands with arms outstretched on the track.

KRUDEWIL: Please, Pempelfort, only three more minutes, I can see a slight haze already, 'Frisco and Freedom. [*Giving in.*] Okay, untie her.

PEMPEL: She isn't fettered. She's sitting cross-legged and quite comfortable. She looks terrible, terrible. I'll go and ask her pardon.

KRUDEWIL: It's her, no mistake. The pistol – where'll I put it? Here, no, not there either, in the tender or on the roof, I'll have to get up there –

[Effects: Clatter.]

– here's the place, in the chimney.

[Effects: Clatter.]

I know how it'll be. She'll want to put straight out to sea. Goodness knows what cargo she'll have taken. A hundred days without sight of land. No more rails, no swallows and telegraph poles, no stationmaster to give you a friendly wave. Nothing. A drunken horizon, half-crazy gulls, and here and there a lighthouse.

NARRATOR: As Krudewil climbs slowly down from the engine, Pempelfort comes back breathless.

PEMPEL: Course sou'-sou'-east. She's got a cargo of pepper.

KRUDEWIL: And otherwise, stormy weather, eh?

[Music and Effects: Bosun's whistle off and into 'Moby Dick' music leading into Frigate's entry.]

PEMPEL: A cut she gave me with her stick, and the flowers I brought for a welcome she ate, every one, stalk and all.

KRUDEWIL: Wish there had been ground mist or a snowstorm and poor visibility. She tacks like a training ship. Spick and span, hard as nails, and no visits except Sundays.

PEMPEL: She's got a following wind, she'll ask us questions. We must prepare ourselves. From stern-post to jib?

KRUDEWIL: Mizzen, mainmast, foremast. Cross-jack, mizzen lower topsail, mizzen upper topsail, mizzen lower topgallant sail, mizzen upper topgallant sail . . .

PEMPEL: Mizzen royal, mizzen skysail, spanker. Now the mainmast. Main course, main lower topsail . . .

KRUDEWIL: Main upper topsail, main lower topgallant sail, main upper topgallant sail . . .

PEMPEL: Main royal, main skysail, moonsail, that's the lot. Now quick, just the foremast. Fore course, fore lower topsail . . .

[Effects: Bosun's whistle approaches under foregoing.]

FRIGATE [approaches]: Fore upper topsail, fore lower topgallant sail,

come on then my knights of the permanent way, my iron horsemen, coal eaters, come on.

[*Music: Climax and out.*]

NARRATOR: And Frigate stands before them, a powerful figure of a woman, in Admiral's uniform, with a model frigate for a hat. Quite at her ease she smokes her three cigars, puffing at each alternately, and sounding her bosun's whistle.

KRUDEWIL: Fore . . . Fore . . .

PEMPEL: Be a man, Krudewil, be a man.

KRUDEWIL: Fore . . . fore . . . fore upper . . .

PEMPEL [*playfully*]: Fore upper topgallant sail. Childsplay it is. Fore royal, fore skysail. Now the mizzen again: cross-jack, mizzen lower topsail, mizzen upper topsail, mizzen lower topgallant sail, mizzen upper topgallant sail, cross royal, mizzen skysail, spanker . . .

NARRATOR: But Krudewil collapses in Pempelfort's arms.

PEMPEL: It's nothing, sir, just a passing sickness . . .

FRIGATE: Tail-sick, sea-sick! A man like a sperm whale, sailed all the seven seas, was at Trafalgar and in the Scheldt,

[*Music: Gentle and meditative under her soliloquy.*]

who's strummed his way along the bones of fish big and small – and what does he get? Sea-sick! [*Bashfully.*] I, a tender maid of Flanders who always sat busily at her spinning wheel, couldn't blow her nose for want of a free hand, a girl who would fall to blushing if anyone just dropped the word 'sweetheart' in her hearing, I, in a century when sorcery and witchcraft were an everyday hobby, I, too, was bewitched, turned into a wooden galleon's figurehead, and later, after countless privateer voyages and sea battles, was kissed by a dolphin, released from enchantment, and made admiral. Lepanto, Trafalgar, Aboukir! I was victorious, had my ship sunk under me, and became that sea-serpent who enlivens the silly season for a newspaper-reading population . . . Ah, Frigate, how often you've had to change course and hunt after your mutinous crew!

[*Music: Break in music, beginning again a sort of dance number (hornpipe?) continuing under the catechism which should be spoken rhythmically to music.*]

As for you, Krudewil, and you, Pempelfort, you should be keel-hauled, tarred and feathered, and what's left thrown to the sharks.

[Effects: Bosun's whistle as she walks round them.]

[Moving round.] Just look at you. [Shouting commands.] To your stations! Jump to it! All hands to starboard!

[Effects: Footsteps of two men running and shuffling.]

To port!

[Footsteps.]

To starboard!

[Footsteps.]

To port!

[Footsteps.]

To starboard!

[Footsteps.]

Amidships!

[Footsteps.]

Astern! Once more midships! And stern! And stern! And stern!

[Music and Effects: footsteps into a confusion of sound – into 'catechism'.]

What's the name of your locomotive?

PEMPEL AND KRUDEWIL [*trance-like*]: Frigate.

FRIGATE: Course?

PEMPEL AND KRUDEWIL: Sou'-sou'-east.

FRIGATE: What do you fire her with?

PEMPEL AND KRUDEWIL: With wind.

FRIGATE: Course?

PEMPEL AND KRUDEWIL: Sou'-sou'-east.

FRIGATE: What are your swallows like?

PEMPEL AND KRUDEWIL: White and live on fish.

FRIGATE: What rails do you run on?

PEMPEL AND KRUDEWIL: The salt rails.

FRIGATE: Course?

PEMPEL AND KRUDEWIL: Sou'-sou'-east.

FRIGATE: And 'Frisco?

PEMPEL AND KRUDEWIL: What's that?

FRIGATE: What direction is San Francisco?

PEMPEL AND KRUEWIL: We don't know.

FRIGATE: San Francisco?

PEMPEL AND KRUEWIL: Never heard of it.

PEMPEL: On Lake Constance perhaps, or Lake Lucerne?

KRUEWIL: Some such dirty hole you'll find down there, I don't doubt.

PEMPEL: Between Bradley and Leeds.

KRUEWIL: Not even a Technical College there.

PEMPEL: Nothing to tempt us that way. It's round the cape for us and beat against the wind.

PEMPEL AND KRUEWIL: Course sou'-sou'-east!

[*Music and Effects: Whistle under and 'Moby Dick' storm music.*]

FRIGATE: By mast and keel! Set all sail, man the mastheads!

NARRATOR: Krudewil hoists Pempelfort on to his shoulders, and Pempelfort, riding him pickaback, keeps lookout. At this moment Axel reappears, bucket in hand, and gazes at them in astonishment.

FRIGATE: Hearts caulked, harpoons ready!

[*Effects: Music out.*]

NARRATOR: Then she notices Axel.

FRIGATE: Mouth shut, cowboy! You're taking the wind out of my foresails. I'll stop it for you, here, like a leak.

NARRATOR: And she stuck two of her cigars in his mouth.

FRIGATE: Go on, draw on them, draw.

NARRATOR: Obediently Axel smokes, while Frigate draws a telescope from her pocket and studies the locomotive. But wait, Pempelfort has sighted something.

[*Effects: Music up, remote.*]

FRIGATE: A wreck, a wreck, drifting to starboard. No breast-rail, no oars, all masts cut . . . Where has it left its jib and foremast, I wonder?

PEMPEL [*remote*]: Whale ahoy! Thar she blows, she blows!

FRIGATE [*meditative*]: Not a man aboard of her. No compass, no home port.

PEMPEL [*remoter*]: Blows, thar she blows!

FRIGATE [*gloomily*]: So I drift too and have no anchor, no compass, no home port.

PEMPEL: Thar, thar, thar she blows!

NARRATOR: At last Frigate tears herself away from contemplation of the locomotive and speaks with decision.

[*Effects: Music louder.*]

FRIGATE: Where blows she?

PEMPEL: There, there, thar she blows!

FRIGATE: He's going to sound.

PEMPEL: Thar he sounds.

FRIGATE: In stunsails, down topgallant sails! Ha, Moby Dick, your hour has come, my iron is ready! Luff, luff a point and all ready the boats!

KRUDEWIL: He's heading straight to leeward.

FRIGATE: Be dumb, man! Stand by the braces! Hard down the helm! – brace up! Shiver her! – shiver her! So, well that! Boats, boats!*

[*Effects: Music out.*]

NARRATOR: Pempelfort and Krudewil make believe to perform these movements and now they sit rowing a boat, Frigate erect at the stern with telescope and one cigar.

[*Effects: Music up – excited soliloquy.*]

FRIGATE: Merrily now, and merrily, and strike, strike, won't ye, the great stroke, the greatest stroke of all, sweet is the blubber, and there'll be pudding today, and virgin's meat. Pull, men, pull till your hair drops out, till your knees grow sharp and your teeth blunt, Frigate is with you, there, there, there she blows, there again, there she blows, whale, whale, there she blows, strike, she blows, the great stroke, she blows [*fading as they move off*], great stroke, she blows, great stroke, she blows, whale, whale, there she blows . . .

[*Effects: Music fades and segue to railway music into climax with effects and a hint of 'Casey Jones' – to end.*]

NARRATOR: And they move off into the fields while Axel shakes his head.

AXEL: Like horseflies they go, after the cows.

NARRATOR: With his bucket and cigars Axel approaches the engine.

AXEL: They want to reach 'Frisco, so they're driving off the cows.

* N.B. Some of the preceding phrases are quoted from *Moby Dick* (translator's note).

NARRATOR: He climbs on to the engine and whistles to his dog.

AXEL [*whistling*]: Here, Jonas, here, good dog! There they go driving off the cows and want to get to 'Frisco. As if the likes of us wouldn't be glad of a little journey too occasionally. It's true I have no relatives in 'Frisco, but just for a day or two, why not? [*Giggling.*]

NARRATOR, Music and Effects: He takes big puffs at his cigars, while the engine howls, gives steam, and starts to move. As it moves off slowly along the rails, Axel looks out of the window of the cab and keeps changing his cigars. The cows moo, the dog barks, the engine chimney flashes and sputters. It is getting too hot for the pistol hidden there by Krudewil.

[*Fade music and effects.*]

Translated and adapted by Christopher Holme

Johannes Bobrowski

PRUZZIAN ELEGY

To sing you
one song,
bright with angry love –
but dark, bitter with
grieving, like wet meadow-
herbs, like the bare pines
on the cliff, groaning
beneath the pale dawn-wind,
burning before evening –

your never sung
fall, which struck us once
in the blood as our days
of child's-play hung
dream-wide –

then in the forests of the homeland,
above the green sea's
foaming impact, we shuddered
where groves had smoked
with sacrifice, before stones,
by long sunken-in gravemounds,
grass-grown ramparts, under the linden
lightly bent with age –

how rumour hung in its branches!
So in the old women's songs
sounds yet
the scarcely to be fathomed
call of the Foretime –
how we heard then

the echo rotting, the cloudy
 discoloured sediment!
 So when the deep bells
 break, a cracked
 tinkle remains.

People of the black woods,
 of heavy thrusting rivers,
 of empty Haffs, of the sea!
 People
 of the night-hunt,
 of the herds and summer fields!
 People
 of Perkun and Pikoll,
 of the corn-crowned Patrimpe!
 People,
 like no other, of joy!
 People,
 like no other, no other, of death! –

People
 of smouldering groves,
 of burning huts, green corn
 trampled, bloodstained rivers –
 People
 sacrificed to the singeing
 lightning-strokes; your cries veiled
 by clouds of flame –
 People,
 leaping before the strange
 god's mother in the throat-
 rasping dance
 and falling –
 how she precedes her
 armoured might, rising
 above the forest! how the Son's
 gallows follows her! –

Names speak of
a stamped-out people, hillsides,
rivers, often still lustreless,
stones and roads –
songs in the evening and legends,
the rustle of lizards names you
and today, like water in the marsh,
a song, poor
with grieving –
poor like the catch of that
whitehaired fisherman, always there
on the Haff when the sun
goes down.

ON THE RIVER

You came
the moon-way, you came down
from Ostra Brama, from the glow
of the old image, your arms
wrapped in your apron. You came
the way to the river.

Light of evening, transient
toil out of dust,
always under the windfall
and gone in the swallow's glide.

Girl,
your look from the reeds.
I called you all day long.
Fill my hands with sand,
I want the moistness, the heaviness.
Now we breathe deeper the darkness.

Did I hear the bird over
the river? or the groundfish
below? – 'Dearest, I hear
always the plop of fishes
and, above, the wingbeat.
Do not go from me.'

KAUNAS 1941

Town,
branches over the river,
copper-coloured, like branching candles.
The banks call from the deep.
Then the lame girl
walked before dusk,
her skirt of darkest red.

And I know the steps,
the slope, this house. There is no
fire. Under this roof
lives the Jewess, lives whispering
in the Jews' silence
– the faces of the daughters
a white water. Noisily
the murderers pass the gate. We walk
softly, in musty air, in the track of wolves.

Evenings we looked out
over a stony valley. The hawk
swept round the broad dome.
We saw the old town, house after house
running down to the river.

Will you walk over
the hill? The grey processions
— old men and sometimes boys —
die there. They walk
up the slope ahead of the slaving wolves.

Did my eyes evade you
brother? Sleep struck us
at the bloody wall. So we went on
blind to everything. We looked
like gipsies at the villages
in the oakwood, the summer
snow on the roofs.

I shall walk on the stone banks
under the rainy bushes,
listen in the haze of the plains.
There were swallows upstream
and the woodpigeon called
in the green night:
 My dark is already come.

THE DUNA

Duna, dawn
and the splendid wind
of the plains always about you.
The old town lies in the smoke.

Cold your banks. Bushes,
a green strip. Your swallows
swoop into
the light.

Weary
at noon
I have come,
I fall on the sand.
I will live from the breath
of the streams, drink
from the springs, the waters
of earth and night, from secret depths
under the grass.

I will live in the fire
of day, part the flames
to see you: in the climbing year
you walk with a heavy mouth,
dark – the gulls
and the waters flash,
screaming the sea receives you –
you go towards it.

In the shadows
from the mud
the old creatures
moan to you.

Translated by R. and M. Mead

Heinz Piontek

TIME AND THE WOMAN

A woman emerges from the dark. Lean, but beautiful in a Polish way. Now she is lying on a bed in a back room that looks on to a yard. The yard is surrounded by sheds containing coffins and by empty stables. Now she is standing in front of a tavern, her nostrils dilated in the darkness. It is moonlight and there is a smell of flax. Since she is now eighty she must once have been twenty. Time cannot simply take away her image like a picture from the wall.

Time. That is apple blossom, a huge sun which you run into, the blue cotton dress, which you wore for the first time and which then got thinner and thinner till it tore. Time is a big strong man with a parting greased in his hair and grimy fingernails who swings you into the air above a stubble field. Then a cuff from this man and you bite back and the whole sky is filled with curses, black like birds of passage, but it's a sky which does not migrate southwards. What is time?

She comes from over the horizon with money. 'I'll buy you a farm, two pepper-and-salt suits, a fine watch, a top hat.' All he said was 'Cigars.' At this hour the world is deserted, the moon rises, and there is a smell of flax. She's happy, because she knows how they'll admire them when they cross the threshold, he and she, a couple before their wedding. Inside, the smell of stinking old oil lamps, nothing but red wild faces in the pub, a fiddle, a drum, a double-bass, and she stamps with her heel and her skirt sweeps over the bespittled floor. From the wall the Kaiser beams at her. She's dancing with the Kaiser, tossing back her fine narrow head and saying: 'Mister Kaiser.' And the Kaiser says: 'You are more beautiful than the Kaiserin.'

Such a night is long. One can't say when it ends. Perhaps the pub is already burnt down, and rosemary, sage and nettles cover the dance floor. It is long since the remote but beaming Kaiser fled his

country, with ten motor-cars and twelve sledges. And if one's ears had been sharp enough one might even perhaps have heard him taking a fierce delight in lopping the trees of his Dutch park – but that night, no dawn can destroy a night like that. Death itself finds her stretched out wantonly on her bed, with her beautifully wrinkled old woman's face of that night and her heels still stamping to the dance.

But how quickly a man's life is done! Horses and wheels over his body and some pink foam between his teeth. That's even more quickly forgotten. Now and then she remembers him driving his beer-cart, a man of forty, bloated, chewing on his cigarillo, finished at forty. But in those years three more sons had been born to them. Paul, Jorg, whom they called Samson, and Richard. She had already had eight children by him and not one had died. Although it makes her angry to think of it, her mind goes back to a filthy day in March when she was sitting in a farm cart – a borrowed one, for all they had in the world was a stove, two sacks of flour, a mountain of red feather pillows, saucepans, cups and spoons – waiting to be driven into the town. Oh yes, we had a goat too and Hann, Anja and Rosalind drove it behind the cart. That was the second farm we'd gambled away. Oh, that first one with its lime trees, gooseberries, tiles and bright red sledge! Gone was the life of this man who was at his best when he came home from the Uhlans, bearing his lance, with a grand twirled moustache and as strong as an ox. He was ready for anything. But the barracks had ruined him. He was a bit lame after a fall from a horse, slunk around in the shadows and carved toothpicks. A man you always thought of alongside horses. Gone.

She's combing her shiny black hair. All the children she brought into the world have her hair and her fine brows. Now it hangs unkempt about her face; she doesn't comb it any more, it's a bush covered with hoarfrost. But the children! When she can't sleep she calls for them: Hann, Anja, Rosalind! Samson! Elsbeth, Paul, Richard! Alexander, Tadeusz, Friedrich Wilhelm! Isn't there one missing? She can't remember, her teeth chatter, it's very cold inside her.

Elsbeth is there grinding coffee in the kitchen. 'Samson has given me some money,' she shouts, 'he's got two basins now in the shop,

real marble they are, and the women come and he strokes their heads and they say: "What wonderful hair you've got, Meister!"

'Make us a good cup of coffee, Rosalind.'

'Rosalind, indeed! I tell you, I'm Elsbeth.'

'It's so dark I can't see you. But tell me more about Meister Samson, he was always my favourite, and he's a real artist. Hann's become a big fat Uhlan like his father; Taddek winds up the big clock in the post-office; Alex is in Vienna, and about Anja the less said the better. But Meister Samson with his splendid little scissors!'

'Oh, do be quiet! The coffee's nearly ready. That'll warm you up, mum, you'll see.'

'It's so dark. We must notice what time it is when the clock strikes, Elsbeth. Once in my life I'd like to hear Taddek's big clock strike.'

'Don't be silly, it doesn't strike.'

'Doesn't strike?'

How beautiful she is. Like a rod. And round her shoulders she always wears a wonderful yellow-fringed shawl with red pearls, an amber pendant and silver rings in her ears. When she goes to mass, how the envious tongues do clack! Twice she had to confess a mortal sin. If only this cold clear rain had not been in her, from the beginning. Dancing, that was heaven, with every eye upon her, growing dark with passion as they watched – but as soon as the fire within her tried to respond, this rain would quench it. She could laugh and sing and groan till she almost choked. But she could love no one but herself. Ask her then, you bastard, whether I've been a bad mother!

'Be quiet. It's not raining. It's just a cloud.'

There's a man for you! Eleven children: Hann, Rosalind, Jorg, whom they called Samson. . . . And time.

First the huge sun you run into. Quiet, quiet! Then the coffins in the shed, in front of the window. And then the Kaiser in the pub. They are all pressing round her, little hungry waves, and she takes the loaf that's as big as a cartwheel, presses it against her breast and saws at it and shares it out. Now the lights are going on up there, time to pack the whole lot of them out of doors, the grubby little beggars, quick, wash your feet in the gutter under the brand-new water mains! But now there's nothing under her bed but a cat purring. And Elsbeth in the kitchen, who mustn't forget to tear a

page off the calendar. The place is thick with cats. And someone whispers that she doesn't even recognize her grandchildren any more. It's as dark as that.

The stables round the yard at the back are empty, just like the coffins in the shed in front of the window. Do the old nags still snort against the wall? Leave me alone, I can't read. It's true that she's never read a book, and has never heard of the splendid goddess who belonged to the miserable limping god. But now it's high time to think of her husband once more. For why else am I beautiful? Come then.

Very stiff and cold she waits for him. He comes stumbling up, the whole vast darkness *one* man, and she stamps with her heels. Now they will spin round, till one of them drops, now and now and now. She must dance her life out. The jewels jingle on her bosom, the cold clear rain. For the last time a voice breaks through. Who is it? Rosalind? Leave me alone! There's a huge sun and I'm running into it.

'What's the matter, mum? What's wrong?'

'It doesn't hurt.'

Translated by Elaine Robson-Scott

Rudolf Hagestange

OCTOPUS

The motionless octopus
moved
when I picked him up on the beach:
a bundle of nauseous leeches
fixed to a darker jellyfish.

With two sticks
(three times he slipped out of them)
I carried him to the knee-deep rockpool.
And there, in the water,
the leeches turned into snakes.
Eightfold a will projected them
this way and that way, quietly
stretching and then withholding,
fingering, letting go,
half holding on, half releasing,
playing, wandering, paddling – the sand
under his torso's breathing muscle
whirled in the water.
Then he rested, arranging
his octet of snakes as Gorgo's diadem.
I saw he was beautiful.

Soon after, the short-legged fishermen spotted him
and smashed him against the rock.

Translated by Michael Hamburger

Hilde Domin

FEAR-DREAM

I have to leave myself.
I'm being taken away
from myself.
I stretch my hands out
to myself,
but I turn a corner
and leave myself who am taken away
in convict's clothes.

After four corners the same street comes
for the person who turns the corner.
Beyond that,
the same street.
But by then I'd be far off,
taken far away,
who stretch my arms out
to myself who turns the corner.

Translated by Christopher Middleton

Walter Höllerer

TWO WAYS OF SINGING

That he sang
To get over
Some kind of distress
They very soon found out,
And they told him so.

His reflections
On how to sing
Brought him to the point
Of pretending to be distressed

So as to get over
A secret
Whoop of joy
Peculiar to him.

Translated by Michael Hamburger

Günter Bruno Fuchs

SONG OF THE LAY-ABOUTS

for Manfred Bieler

I

Pub,
fat rag and bone collector, lovely morning
that wraps us up in whisky-sodden togs,
you know, low dive, that we are
a paddling pool for crayfish and hungry gulls,
a kip-down for the singing of stevedores:
Remona! we'll have it in before the dawn -
a handful of leaves
adrift
past the great road-sweeper's monument,
a litter of saluting cats
when between the upper and the lower denture
alcohol unfurls his reeking banner.

2

Hand us the clobber then!
The bottle cheers up a Sunday! Pub, you rusty
mirror, show us the mugs of your regulars.
The one that pleases you best will hit the floor tonight:
Look out, the swing is taking its most well-mannered
thieves on board: now the sky will be made lighter,
gently turned inside out.
Alarm, you knights of patrol cars, alarm.
Bulging pockets full of hours we have bagged, we feel
the itch of the world-wide game: That bird behind the bar
can't be more than twenty. We sit
on squeaking chairs, and we're on our way
with a load of bed-time stories all on the house.

3

In the morning pubs
 day attacks us, that shaky old stalwart who always lands on his feet.
 When he begins to speak,
 silly, fine sentences with words made of hey and gee-up,
 he's getting the dray carts ready outside:
 taxis for zero point nought, bridal carriages
 from east to west, from beer to whisky –
 Cleopatra's old lags' club on wheels.
 We drive through the tunnel that wants to gobble us up.
 Come closer, frontier coppers, grab yourselves by the scruff of the
 neck,
 come closer and make it a goose-step! The piss-house attendants
 will present each one of you with an autograph.
 One at a time, though, please!

4

Here we are, glaring light! Our highly esteemed
 laziness lies down on the stamping-pad –
 the day's work over, back to back with us,
 in her sleep she hears the orders of office files,
 our names are bundled up, the ministerial
 pen-pusher issues a new regulation!
 Pub, here we are, loitering night –
 a dusty assortment of holy monkeys –
 our vow to keep our traps shut, to let eye and ear
 see nothing, hear nothing, ever:
 we've put all our eggs in your basket.
 Give us a bite of bread, and we'll eat,
 give us a pair of ravens' wings, and we'll flit! –
 give us the mighty double-barrelled fart,
 so we can answer in the proper manner.

Translated by Michael Hamburger

Arno Schmidt

From 'DIE GELEHRTENREPUBLIK'

: 'Oh-no' she said sleepily (I'd never heard anyone speak so slowly!). And went on chewing at her blades of grass. – Man, how come's a naked girl lying here? And bestride a (stricken?) deer?!

She took a fresh stalk from the coarse-fibred sacklet by her side; eyed it critically; awarded a trial nibble. – Then (in the self-same slow-motion intonation: some consonants extraordinarily heavily accented, and a mighty powerful voice withal; droll): 'You're no forester,' she deliberated. A couple more bites. Raised her body: –! *Prostrate deer and all!!!* : I couldn't believe my eyes (and my fingers stared at them, flabbergasted; to say nothing of my mouth): ça alors. : was a centauress?? – –

So this was a centauress! : several times I walked around her, who watched serenely amused. –:

A fabulous ashblonde stand-up mane, which started above her forehead in an impudent forelock, amenable to fringe or back-swept styling: channelled down a sweet nape of neck, and on between the shoulder-blades; continued at hand-height along the back strait; till it finally tumbled over into her black-tasselled tail.

Rather like a Grant-gazelle from the rear: quite a tautly stretched close-cropped pelt; back and outer shanks of pale russet hue. Belly and inside legs white: 4 slim legs.

And up front – a naked girl, no less; with arms! – Now I stood facing her, she inclined her narrow high head, and laughed at me : ? / The nose: firmly joined to her forehead by its wide bridge. A long red mouth. Throat. Ivory shoulders, smooth and sleek. Teenage bubs. Slender hips. Long girl's legs (but imagine – hooves to boot: almost as if a contemporary, hard, lady's shoe had taken root at the ankle). Back to the face (wow: large, pointed, brown velvet ears as well; mobile, with a wind-resistant look about them). (About 5.5 tall*:

* Equals 1.65 metres by the old German measure. [All footnotes as in original. Ed.]

that figures). She smiled patiently; archly. And her tongue ran one lap round her lips: which were considerably larger than mine; (hence presumably the ponderous diction!).

'*What's your name?*' came to me. : 'Thalja'* from her. And, persistently, 'You're no forester.' / No; I was none. Still stood, however, as if bewitched. The which I was, without a doubt! : Her tail flicked at her side, one lash).

Bewitched: 'Are you *pretty!*' – And I really meant it true. (And got an erection from savouring her pearlike breast, as was apparent in my baggy trousers; she blushed with childish pleasure.) / We were soon trying out each other's names! No sooner had she coquettishly moved away than – : 'Thalja!' – and she swept round on her behind, and came upon the most exquisite curtsy; so close, that her nipples were almost touching mine. (Then I had, perforce, to play my part and haughtily withdraw; whereupon she at once uttered, 'Char-ley' – and when I turned back she was standing there expectantly, the coy tuft of tail in her left hand.)

'*Coming with for a bit?*' (And I asked with every intention, in all consciousness of a fait accompli: I'd be safer in her company for the present – at least in regard to all centaurs! Besides, her conversation might yield vital information about the dangers of this Hominide-zone).

She nodded ardently and long : 'Oh; gladly.' She was ready to give way at the foreknees, and dip her ashblonde crest grasswards: which I gallantly forestalled, handing up her things – a spear like mine. A leather-bandolier (drinking-flask and provender bag attached), which she sported from one shoulder to the other hip. A sunhat yet, with broad, pendulous brim (which she stuck on her back à la morbleu; like an old-style Florentine – : 'Chic!').

Side by side: our 6 feet rustled in the loose sand. Very quiet. The half-tones of our chat. Serene foliage above. (No higher than our spear-points could reach.) / We crossed a wide clearing dotted with mimosa-shrubs: when we looked round, under a pair of spindly trees again, we could retrace our steps exactly from the uninterrupted

* American pronunciation; something like 'Ssaldscha' transcribed into German, with pretty sharply lisped 'Ss' at the beginning. – Likewise her subsequent 'Tschaa-lich'.

wake of tiny trampled-down ferns. (And exchanged smiles at that. – As if by accident, I laid my hand on that place where girls and gazelles meet – the fingers could be pushed deliciously deep into the resilient upright mane : ! – and she made no demur.).

How to make conversation with a young centauress? – Best simply get going, eh? / : ‘How old art?’ – ‘Oh,’ she said, ‘it’s my birthday today: all of 24 Gow-chrómmms. –’ “Gow-chrómmms”?; first she had to explain what that means; what shines crooked by night; ever changing round. (Natch, the old moon-beam!). / And further enlightenment: at 20 moons of age they get their outfit (she dabbed at her food-bag) including weapons. At 40 they have to become mothers. / Drinking-water? : all rivers expired in the salt-marshes; certain hot springs were legend.

The cactus fields?!: She immediately frowned and bared her strong teeth scornfully: ‘Never-nevers hang out in there!’ / Pell-mell, my imagination was made up: skyscraping preying mantises, green-skinned, articulated beasts? – She saw from my hands that I actually had no idea; and let me in on what the pig of a colonel had mapped out for me:

Never-nevers! : *The mutational jump* had been directed, through excessive radiation, towards hexapody,* generally speaking. C’est à dire, there were manifold combinations of human forms on the one hand, and insects and hoofed beasts on the other. Out of all the ephemeral confusion, these centaurs seem to have presented themselves as tolerably stable. Alongside the above-mentioned Never-nevers. (And yet a third type, of which I couldn’t form a reasonable conception from her muddled description; seemed relatively harmless though. If I was not mistaken, this also had a human face?).

Anyhow, the Never-nevers: these were giant spiders! The soft, poison-grey belly about half a yard in diameter. A human head at the helm (with all manner of new button-features: the ears had fallen out, for instance, in favour of dot-eyes); plus proboscis. Poison-claws on two frontal feet; so heavily loaded that two sufficed to knock the toughest centaurs unconscious. Four were lethal!

Hence the ‘spider-spear’ with the crossbeam; and she demonstrated:

* Six-footedness.

the monster was impaled with it; thrust into the sand; and finally bludgeoned to death. / But they never voluntarily left their moist, shady cactus-thickets. Where they spun their nets, out of virtually unbreakable wire-thick threads. And so trapped foolhardy, juvenile centies (and also the old and ill, or those stupefied by poisoned grasses). – And also that third type which, I came to understand by degrees, came in 2 variants. / Anyway, deadly enmity was established. (And I certainly shuddered to think of me – how I would have sought out so trustingly those cooling shades. Might well have taken a nap hard by the foot of one of these hairy pillars – : what a dirty dog, that commander!! / And indeed the entire military police: didn't want an inkling to leak out, huh; in fact, only granted my permit with the insidious provision that I should not come back again.

(Well, I'd have to be *veryvery* careful – now and in the future! A veto on publication would be the very least. Should I manage to get through alive. (And to this end had to start by getting off well with my fair Thalja; to go by the book, in fine!)).

'Thalja?!' : She pushed her lower jaw forward, and schooled a deep hedonistic 'Mmmm?'. I placed myself in front of her. Grasped her 2 smooth shoulders; (these she withheld only slightly, so that her bosom thrust farther forward: nice!). She raised the outer extremes of her elongate eyebrows. Began panting more and more urgently. Her white flanks pressed closer, hoof to shoulder. Her tail whipped agitatedly rightleftright; leftrightleft. / (And then our first euphoric kiss!)

She probed my rugged coating of skin with wild unpractised fingers:~ – So I threw this off. And made so bold as to take a breast in each fist: (tremendously firm; like white-leather pears. The whole frontal third a pouting raw-pink point). / She couldn't hold out any longer. Whinnied sweetly from the throat; flung her tenacious arms round my shoulders, and constrained the union of our bosoms. Eyes closed. Stuck a huge portion of tongue in my mouth (and tasted good and warm; of grassblades; I thought of spelt and aristae, grain-mouth, threshers . . . ? – :! – :

a fine high-pitched barking under the ground?!' – But she didn't relax our embrace; only cocked her large ears once, vigilantly (till it

occurred to me too, that it was only prairie-dogs. And right lustily I hove to once more). –

Hurry to a more intimate spot (yet was I pestered by countless major scruples!). / But the shadow of her citron-tinged hat-brim bobbed so cutely over her cheek. And she held my hand so diligently. And owned:

'*Shilbit – my girlfriend* – she went with a forester for 14 days. And told me *everything*: ohhhhh!'. She gasped and threw her chest back in raptures: 'Can you do that? It's permitted for us, at 20: *the lot!*' And so to the thicket (and she stood in position; her first time; snorting for joy). / So I did my level best (and a damn comical situation after all: had to keep my eyes clammed! Except when she tilted her face back to the most impossible angle; it didn't quite reach, but at least we kissed the air in front of our faces. And from there you could imagine . . . a girl.) / Till I began to get backache. On account of the clicking French style*.

Our breath still pulsating O labour of love; her flanks all atremble; we lay side by side. / Her forelegs buckled. All her warmnesses. The blond tail still rocketed above us now and then: Both. Her high head started up; murmuring: 'That felt good back there!' (Fervent nodding; the breastbuds wagging too; each time I caught one; with my lips; at which she laughed slumbrously. And at last laid the yellow sheaf of her head on mine. (And lazy kissing. And grass-breath.)).

(*How many moons have I got on my back, incidentally?* In case she should ask: 30 times 12 ('can't work; so I'll borrow me one'). The balance of my 29. 5 cyclic days on top of that; plus another 4 or 5 . . . makes about . . . what: 375. So I'll say 100. (Or 80). – 'case she asks.)
–. –.

Slept a bit without thinking! (But the sun was still high: for a sec I thought I'd dreamt '*the lot*'. Till I took several looks at her; wide awake the while.

Deep in thought, she bent her head; drew it to her, and munched at the

* Incomprehensible. – The speech of those centaur-types is a slightly corrupted American – as is irreproachably indicated by the foregoing – and the following. But one will have to get accustomed to such inaccuracies owing to the possibly occupational prenticely haste of the author.

tip. Wound her long muscular tongue round it (so rough, it felt hairy!); tore at it for ages, and swallowed away* : that's what they call siesta! . . .

Translated by Michael Horovitz

* The author means a stem of buffalo-grass, *Buchloe dactyloides Engelm.*, if I understand him right.

Erich Fried

NURSERY

'The hand which you raise
to strike your own mother
that hand when you die
grows out of your grave'

I drew a picture of green hillocks
with blue and yellow crosses
here and there beside them grew
a black spread-fingered hand

'Why don't we see any hands
in the graveyard by the playground?'
'Because the sextons pick them
and take them to the museum

There every child can see them
the coalblack arms and hands
which found no peace in the grave
for they had struck their mothers'

I drew a picture of men bringing
shouldered like long muskets
black arms with black hands
into a building marked MUSEUM

'But when the hands are picked
do the dead find peace in the grave?'
'No for the guilty hands
keep growing up again'

I drew a picture of green graves
with long hands ripe for picking
and little sprouting hands
and fingers coming like buds

'Why then can a man
whose hand has been chopped off
not grow a new hand?
Why does it only grow from the grave?'

'Because my child the dead lie
where the flowers are growing
that's why the hands grow
like black flowers in the night'

I drew a picture of glass vases
hung with ivy and ribbons
full of black arms and hands
with five and with seven fingers

Always the biggest hands
had long curved fingernails
and the vase stood in the middle
of a table that was laid

Translated by Christopher Middleton

THE PORTION

When injustice
is carved into many slices
how thin must that slice be
which daily is put on my bread?

Thinner than the glass partition
that separates me from life
than the blade of the blunt knife
that cuts me to pieces

Translated by Michael Hamburger

THE EXECUTION

Three trees by the law
were found guilty
of harbouring the aliens
in their leaves.

The sentence was carried out
before the assembled people
the children in front
by schools with their teachers

The trees were first
stripped of their leaves
then hanged by their branches
so that they swung when the wind came

The children sang
the sweet old forest solitude song
and pressed leaves in schoolbooks
as a warning example

Translated by Christopher Middleton

Konrad Bayer

THE PEAR

and he bit into a pear a golden yellow pear as they say precisely that yellow pear so juicy the water ran from the corners of his mouth which the day before had lain so far forward on frau jekel's open fruitstand and then he had come by he had been on his way to the museum and he could not resist buying this juicy 24 decagram pear for one schilling twenty groschen that very pear itself cheap at the price which with many others about 2 tons of golden yellow if this description is permitted pears had been delivered on monday october 14 by gredler's transport firm linke alszeile 24 to the wholesale grocer ellsler by remesberger junior the remesberger from wels to the federal capital together with the invoices for the previous deliveries and remesberger was proud for one does not get every day the trade of a customer like ellsler after all ellsler of the bandgasse and ellsler knew the market was going bust and went to remesberger who was glad that he could deliver to him and the market will go bust unless a miracle if the expression is permitted happens and remesberger going bankrupt too and who is going to buy pears at that price and then ellsler's carrier had dropped the pear and old jekel said well if that's how you do your work i must sell cheaper and who's going to pay me for the loss with this writ posted up here how do you think eh it's low quality goods the customers know that but frau jekel was only a oh well i'll just put it in front the one with the soft patch that one behind there well all right said frau jekel then and placed the soft pear that is to say the one which ferdinand nevosad 74 despite his age still working in königstetten almost three weeks before had brought from the tree and right up in front from the tree moreover on which in his thirtyeighth year a certain kronik that is to say in its bark kronik born in the lavanttal at that time married in königstetten with his initials s k had eternalized himself with his pocketknife if the expression is permitted because his first name was

stefan at which time this kronik trod with his right foot on the stone which years later the aforementioned nevosad and years moreover before picking the pear because he nevosad as native of königstetten almost always spent some time in this place which is not at all surprising if you knew nevosad picked up the stone which for no apparent reason had lain for all those years in rain and snow and so on if these expressions are permitted in the same place secured by the force of gravity while this point too like the whole region also like the whole earth was ceaselessly turning around itself thus lay that ungiddy if the expression is permitted stone and just then nevosad threw it and threw it several metres southsoutheast where on the longsince mown barleyfield of agnes pöller who in those days with her 43 years still did not know the difference between man and woman came to rest and so doing stopped beside a trouserbutton which the burgomaster's children erich and wolfgang slobinsky after hours of chewing it in the königstetten elementary school had spat out on their way home to the burgomaster's premises there it thus was that nevosad threw the stone it was a fairly ordinary grey pebble with his right hand with his left he would not have been clever enough besides it was not his custom to use it so he threw with his right hand which shook that of lorenz vutz two hours afterward which he vutz then on the following friday lost in the mechanical saw of his brother for whom he worked as a labourer since having to give up his part-time job in the trainskirchner rubber works because of his being an alcoholic and with this hand with which he still had to shake that other one he had then as has been said if the expression is permitted picked the pear and put it among the other pears in the basket which his wife since nevosad was married which his wife marie nevosad from vienna brought back with her the last time she had gone to town and had met her friend reinhold ponzer loved him and left him thinking of him ponzer she had caught the train westward to königstetten and with him ponzer in her thoughts had flung herself with the help of the train departuretime vienna 1641 hours to tulln against the rotation of the earth and even if to no effect whatever then that if nothing else and into the basket nevosad put the pear which he had torn from the tree which was good for its 34 years and did not bear much fruit now but all the same nevosad had climbed up and placed

the pear from the tree among the others from the other trees which were much younger and also bear good fruit for otherwise there would be no money in wawerka's fruitgrowing whose tree it was and for whom nevosad too since july 17 last year if the expression is permitted had been working as a tractor driver especially if one considers that nevosad is about the same age as wawerka and they have known each other a long time and were also at school together that is at pottingbrunn that is in the war in which they were trained as parachutists and it was there too that wawerka said i'll stick this knife in the englishman just so that the blood will come squirting out and with his hand he tore down the pear and placed it among the others but a bit of branch had come away with it where before the blossom had been into which two bees wanted to go at the same time that is into the blossom in 1943 when the bomb dropped on paternioner's barn in the same or identical year when the two bees if the comparison is permitted could not both get into that blossom and then he put the pear down again bitten into as it was and the flies settled on it and the next day he looked at it again and thought the flies have settled on it because it has been bitten into and i did not go on eating anymore that one anyhow does taste bitter

Translated by Christopher Middleton

Max Hölzer

PABLO PICASSO: LA CALIFORNIE 1956

Night
which hollows nests in the trees
Night
which flies from the trees with the nests

Who surprises the great window-buds
when they unfold

Under palms
they bronzed the flesh
under chandeliers which sway their arms
between two glances
black seals sever
awakened blood
and the day that was which cried pity

the rocking-chair empty of breasts and moons

He has nothing of that gipsy
of that Colossus who survived Dachau
who is so gentle that his muscles
never quite free themselves from day from night
that bender of iron
and yet

A skein of earth and black fuzz
passed through the wall of his heart

The floor shines like liquid
floor and ceiling
like the horse-chestnut which sprang from the husk
like the greywhite of the boiled chestnut
drawn smoking from the water

like the brightness leaning softly on the dusk
they draw humming borders in wide orbits and angles

The herd sleeps and becomes invisible

For us he warms
the ice of his eye

An old flame melts
the cast of nights

A soul like quicksilver wreaths the branch
anoints naked wood
strangles the slaughterer in a net of mirrors

Death must make water

Shamed death passes
there in the shoe-box
which children stood on the mantelpiece
blurred the royal pair
the frame free
the butter dreams above the rock crystal which lifts its horns

Vaults frames cupboards full of hair
veins branching
in us all
hair written singly into the earth
in mica ready to fly
in new vases

Tears above the rock
the unwept which sun smoothes
the earth a nun
whom goodness surrounds anew with stairs and caves of flesh and
azure

He clears the ground without hoe without weapons
Fear clears the ground
and celebrates

Our glance flutters like a dove
tucks its head in its feathers like a dove
laughs like a dove

We land on living breasts in the lighted branches of the dead
see pupils of light
and him on the beach.

WOMAN AND BIRD

The grass does not penetrate the pores
of the white body
in the field
where a raven waits big as a bush
the grass burns in the sky

After the wind scrubs the roofs
clean with the ash
of the tilers
the grass burns
like a sun
in the sky

to gild the earth for the woman

A crack in the dry ground

Split in the bird's beak

None of the lightnings
with which the vastness hunts itself
strikes into her
her eyes are empty

The white of the thighs is set in coal
Past and future have blackened
in the mass of hair
A long bird-foot descends
steps over the wall of day

She is hurled
from the tower of light
she is hurled again and again
She pours herself like abundance
there on the bare earth
bright and stiff and the thighs spread
Above her the ostrich-head
stares into space

The high moment is like the crucifixion of a slave
There is no feeling
for the reality of the crucifixion
Slaves are as stiff as sticks
and do not distinguish when they eat
between the bread of love and the bread of death

Under a sky of iridescent feathers
the nerves of bread tremble

She who sat
in the field
her soul mounted in flame
her shell-white body
in this
day
crystal become flesh
softening
admitting death

Her nakedness
is a wall of wishes

What huge bird of iron and air
vibrates
in the detachment of awaking

Her body is
like the holy sepulchre
courted by black fragments

Translated by R. and M. Mead

Jakov Lind

HURRAH FOR FREEDOM

Don't get your hopes up and don't expect too much – the man who said these words was named Leonard Balthasar and weighed close to twenty-two stone. Everything about him was pale and fat – even his moustache. Without the moustache he might have been taken for a fat old woman.

You'll meet my women if we hurry. Yes, I say women, two of them are my sisters, one is my mother. We live out here, all seven of us.

How come seven? asked the other Leonard. For he too was named Leonard – they had made the discovery, to their mutual delight, after they had gone less than fifteen miles. The second Leonard was deeply grateful to the fat one. But for him he'd never have got out of Lund. Now he was looking forward to a warm bed, coffee and cigars, and breakfast. It was bad enough in the daytime, at night nobody stopped to pick you up.

How come seven? – Because we've got three children. Used to be seven. We slaughtered four. Swedish sense of humour, said the second Leonard to himself. But he was a medical student from Vienna and nothing could fluster him. So he asked: Nothing else doing at your place?

Oh sure, said the fat man. There's plenty more. We're nudists, we've got a pig in the cellar, and a dead horse hanging from the rafters.

That was a little better.

Balthasar, said the second Leonard, is that Swedish?

No, Lithuanian, said Balthasar. When the Germans cleared out, so did we. My father couldn't make it. Or my uncle either. Forty-four of our relatives were deported to Siberia, two were shot. That's the Russians for you.

We've been living here for fifteen years, it's a good country,

nobody meddles in other people's business. Quiet, civilized people. Discreet. Yes, this is what I call a country. You can stay with us as long as you feel like it, but there aren't any rooms. We've torn down the walls, the stairs too. More space that way. Beds, yes, we've got those. Are you tired?

I guess I am, said the second Leonard.

And you're studying . . . ?

Medicine. In Vienna. Ah, medicine – in Vienna. I know Vienna. I was there for six months, during the war. Beautiful city, fine opera. I'm crazy about music. Do you travel much? You students are always travelling around. If you get to Russia some time let me know, I can help you and there's something you can do for me.

I'll be in Russia in two weeks, said Leonard, going by way of Stockholm, Helsinki and Leningrad. But from Helsinki I'm taking the train.

Really, said the fat man, really, then you're a gift from heaven.

The house stood all by itself in a forest, though not a dense one, and there was a village within a mile and a half. It wasn't as out of the way as he had imagined.

By the time the two crawled out of the car – help me, young man, cried Balthasar – it was twelve o'clock. It was drizzling but not cold. There was light in the house.

Mother! called Balthasar. The door opened and a fat woman stood in the entrance, holding a pair of slippers. Otherwise she had nothing on.

The house was really large, or rather high, there were no doors or windows, no stairs either, as Balthasar had said, it was very spacious. Let's undress, said Balthasar. It's too warm in here. And indeed the stone flags were almost steaming. It wasn't just warm, it was hot. Balthasar took off one piece of clothing after another, in the end he had nothing on but the slippers the naked old woman set down at her feet. From the far corner of the room the place was enormous and only sparingly lighted, two feeble bulbs hung down on a wire from far above, voices were heard, first one, then another: Are you there? cried a woman's voice, is it you, Leonard? cried another.

Yes, it's me, cried Leonard, and I've brought another Leonard

with me. A medical student from Vienna, he's going to spend the night here.

Two female figures detached themselves from the wall, both naked, both fat. One might have been forty, with a squint in her right eye, the second was about thirty and had black hair. They looked him up and down. Leonard felt ashamed when he noticed that he was still dressed. He put down his knapsack and began to undress, keeping on only his watch. The women smiled. Here was a well-mannered guest, no need to explain the customs of the house. The one with black hair went to a cupboard and came back with slippers. They'll fit you, she said. The floor is too hot without them. Leonard put on the slippers, they were warm and lined. He looked around. There were two tables and a few chairs, several couches, and all sorts of cupboards, all the furniture was lined up along the walls, that was what made the place so spacious. There was a television set and even a piano. There were flowers in each of the eight windows.

The place smelt of flowers, hyacinth and jasmine, but it also smelt of something else.

Leonard looked up towards the ceiling and there it was, hanging from the beams. A horse. The bones were beginning to protrude from the flanks. The three women and Leonard followed his glance. Three years more, said the woman who had opened the door, she was maybe sixty and her breasts hung down slack to her navel (she was the mother).

Three years more and we'll have the skeleton.

A Lithuanian custom? Leonard inquired.

Only with the Balthasars, said Balthasar. But let's sit down.

The children are asleep, said the one with the squint, we mustn't talk too loud.

They all took seats at a round table to the right of the windows. Beside it there was an ultra-modern sink, aluminium and teakwood, a refrigerator, and a washing-machine. Pots and pans hung on the walls. They were in the kitchen. The mother went to the cupboard and came back with a large stone jug. We make our own kvas, she said, and poured him a cupful. Then she poured some for her children. The daughters drank only to be polite, just so they could get a good look at the guest.

You've come from Vienna today? asked the one with the squint. From Lund, said Balthasar. He's a medical student. His name is Leonard too. I couldn't let him sleep on the highway. It's too dangerous nowadays, said the one with black hair, the papers are full of it. There's quite a lot of crime in Sweden, you wouldn't have thought so, would you? Only last week, said the mother, a man on a bicycle was attacked near Ödeshög, first robbed, then stabbed. Sweden's not what it was before the war. We used to come here often, the children were little then, but who'd have supposed we were going to end up here? – The Russians deported my husband, he died in Siberia, did Leonard tell you? Yes, said Balthasar. He poured down the kvas, he was hot and thirsty. After the first gulp the second Leonard couldn't go on. He could have sworn the stuff tasted like blood diluted with lemon juice.

Ach, the Russians, whined the old woman. Deported forty-four relatives, shot two. My husband's dead, I know that. Why don't you drink? – we make it ourselves. It's fresh.

Is there blood in it? Leonard was curious to know, if only for his diary.

Stuck him today, said the elder sister. Once a week we draw off four quarts. You wouldn't believe how he thrives on it. Tell him, Vera.

That surprises you, said the younger. Hog's blood mixed with the kvas, that's what makes it a real drink. My brother introduced it here. He learned it from a Finn during the war.

He was a shepherd, said Balthasar, shepherds have the old folk-wisdom, they've got tradition too. I was way up north for the reindeer market. There wasn't any market, no more reindeer either, the Wehrmacht had used them up long ago. The shepherd, his name was Eino, was lying in a hut, just about smothered in his own shit, the lice were running across the floor like ants. He was nearly starved to death, all he had was a drink – he called it kvas – it was pure blood, human blood, the day before he had stuck a knife into his two children, couldn't stand to see them starve. Wartime, see, the Wehrmacht didn't have anything either, so Eino had to live on his children's blood. Before the war, he told me, they'd always drunk hog's blood, the taste didn't bother him, but it got him down to be drinking his

own children. He didn't last long anyway, little kids haven't got much blood. I gave him a loaf of bread. When I came back two weeks later – I had to go way up to the coast – the bread was untouched and Eino was dead.

So now we drink hog's blood to his health. It's cheap and very nutritious. Skoal – Balthasar poured down another cupful.

Mother, bring us something to eat. The old woman got up and went to the refrigerator.

Now I understand about the hog, said Leonard.

As a medical student he mustn't let anything upset him, it was a matter of professional dignity, he owed it to himself, but the horse. . . . Why the horse?

I'll explain, said the old woman. She set down a bowl of pickled meat. Have a bite to eat. She gave him a big chunk, it was covered with onions and swimming in oil and vinegar. It's almost like home, Leonard thought. He took one bite, then let it be. He could have sworn it was human flesh. But Balthasar had tied on his napkin and was eating with gusto, shovelling in such big chunks he could hardly close his mouth. The dressing ran down over his chin.

The horse is in memory of the old country. My husband was a horse-trader. We had to leave everything behind, the farm, the animals, everything. We couldn't sell a thing – the Russians got there too fast. The first thing they did was to requisition the horses. They gave us a receipt. The old woman had tears in her eyes. We left next day, you can't fool with the Russians. We were sitting in the wagon, looking back. Tina, the mare, was lying not ten paces from the yard, with her tongue hanging out, shot. She'd run away from the Russians, she wanted to follow us. They didn't have time to catch her so they shot her. That's the Russians for you. Yes. That's the liberators.

Four years ago we bought the horse, and hung it up there in memory of Tina, in memory of the old country. And when it's all rotted away and only the skeleton is left – Lithuania will be a free country again, the Russians will be gone to hell.

Yes, now we're just waiting for the skeleton, it can't be long now, said Balthasar between two bites.

We're refugees, said the squint-eyed one, looking up at the horse with her good eye. Refugees have got to be patient. Am I right?

And the stink? asked the second Leonard.

The flowers take it away, said the younger sister, and you get used to it in time. Our people have to put up with worse under the Russian boot, it stinks to heaven of corruption and slavery – a dead horse in the house is the least we can do for our country.

The old woman just sat there with tears in her eyes. Balthasar had stopped eating and belched a few times to show he'd enjoyed it.

That was Hedda, he said. – No, Hedda was finished long ago, said the elder sister, that was Martha. You don't even know your own flesh. – This must have been a good joke, for they all laughed. We'll keep Arno for Sunday, mother will cook him up into Carelian soup. – He won't be as good as my Werner, said the younger. – You and your Werner, fumed the elder sister. You and your Werner, my Arno was prettier. – Prettier, hare-lip and all, laughed the younger. – You hold your tongue, cried the squint-eyed sister. Nobody's going to say mean things about my boy. – Quiet, cried the old woman. Say something, Leonard.

Leonard Balthasar banged the table with his fist. What's our guest going to think of us, behave yourselves, girls. Who d'you get the kids from? Well, out with it.

From you, Leonard, stammered the elder. – Yes, of course, from you, said the black-haired one.

That's more like it, said Leonard Balthasar, picking his teeth. You see, the children are all from me.

Leonard the Second felt slightly sick in his stomach, he had taken a bite. Human flesh, children's flesh – he was going to throw up. No, he said to himself and took a deep breath, a medical man can't do that. A philosopher – yes. A medical man has to control himself. But I've got to get out of here and quick. He stood up, the others stood up too.

You're not leaving? said Balthasar. Where can you go tonight? It's warm here.

Too warm, said Leonard. He wanted to be polite, but he couldn't manage it. I've got to be going. You're cannibals.

Cannibals. He reached for his clothes and dressed, he couldn't do it very quickly. Balthasar held him by the arm. A cold shiver ran through his bones.

You mustn't leave like this, Balthasar said gently and menacingly. The old woman came between them. Listen please, Mr Student, we might as well tell him. Tell him, tell him, cried the sisters. We're poor refugees, said the old woman. All these things you see here, washing-machine and all, were given us by rich relatives in America, they gave us the car too. – She was crying again. – They gave us everything. Except something to eat. My daughters had no trousseau, my son didn't have a nickel. How could they get married? But people want children. We haven't anything to eat, just the vegetables and potatoes we grow out at the back.

People want a piece of meat. That's what happens to poor refugees (now the two daughters were crying too), reduced to eating their own children.

That's what it comes to.

Then why don't you go home to Lithuania? Leonard was losing control.

To Lithuania, to the Russians? Do you know what you're saying? – They dragged off forty-four relatives to Siberia, shot two. My husband's dead. We'll go back to Lithuania after the next war when the horse is a skeleton. You don't know the Russians, that's easy to see. – Yes, the squint-eyed daughter joined in, that's easy to see.

The noise woke the children, they jumped out of bed and pressed against the women's legs. The children were from three to five years old, each of the women picked one up to comfort it. Out of sleepy eyes they looked distrustfully at the clothed stranger. The youngest, a blonde girl of three, began to cry. Stop that, said Balthasar. The child fell silent at once. In this house they don't threaten the children with punishment, thought Leonard. They have to do as they are told.

The seven naked creatures stood around him, in his clothes it was stifling hot, they all had bloated white bodies (and all the women were without pubic hair, another Lithuanian custom?). Leonard felt as if he were dreaming.

He was rather sorry for them, a well-dressed hunter on safari can't help feeling sorry for the savages he meets. He would have liked to give them a handful of glass beads or a mirror. They are poor and proud, Leonard said to himself. Actually, what did he himself know of the Communist yoke – all hearsay. Here for the first time he was

seeing the real victims. They moved him almost to tears. But a medical man has to control himself.

True, they were naked, they ate their children, and the whole house stank. But in the paradise of workers and peasants, as his newspaper said, the people were still worse off. And besides, they're not allowed to travel.

In two weeks I'll be in Russia, said Leonard. He wanted to make up with Balthasar, after all he had given him a lift. It wasn't their fault if their diet disagreed with him.

Yes, said Balthasar, I wanted to talk to you about that. But I see you're in a hurry. Just do me one favour, ask for the first Lithuanian, there are still a few of our people in Russia. And the first Lithuanian you meet, here's what I want you to say to him: The Balthasars are fine. They want for nothing. The Balthasars wish you confidence in the future, in a few years there'll be war, the skeleton will be finished, and Lithuania will be free again.

Please remember all that when you get to Russia and meet any of our enslaved brothers or sisters.

Leonard promised. To escape from hell he promised everything.

The naked Balthasars waved after him, long after he had vanished in the woods, on his way to the highway, on his way to Russia. He was tired, but glad to be all in one piece.

That's what insanity is like, thought Leonard, as he fell asleep by the roadside, but none of my friends will believe a word of it. All medical men.

Translated by Ralph Manheim

Hans Carl Artmann

POEM

i am a polar planet i cost a hundred dollars
a polar bear gave birth to me glittering one winter night

i buy my furs in the best shops of alaska
i say good frost to the shopgirl she gives it to me

my light makes cracks in the walls of atomic submarines
glittering my name is displayed in nautical streamers

captains honour me as their president presidents love me
as they love their very best captains winter nights i glitter

they carry me like a glass moon what would become of them all
without me i master them as they do the lids of their watches

i look them all in the eyes because of me there are
many blue eyes out of the bottlegreen sea i often emerge

thunder booms in the icebergs i snap my fingers
three eskimo girls lie waiting in my sea-lion's bed

one of my names is sea-lion the girls walk naked in
the snow in my glitter they renew their beauty

i buy them skins in the best shops anywhere in alaska
and i'm also a very northerly totem pole winter nights

when i go to bed with my glitter i throw
the three eskimo girls on the floor they utter low shrieks

they come back again they scratch my glitter quite fiercely
i love my glitter but also like the eskimo girls

i give them a lot of children beautiful seals and bears
sea-lions and auks i fill their bellies with all my names

my sea-lion hut is well-built very decent and solid
over the entrance a shining beak is mounted my birdhouse

i am a glittering sea-lion an auk and a polar bear
a seal a captain and a walrus trapper as well

Translated by Michael Hamburger

Kuno Raeber

THE INNER LIGHT: VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY LEIBNIZ

'The inner light which God himself has lit in us,
can be aroused by sensuous experience of the world,'
aroused by the lamp-shop down the suburban shopping street
which showed me its teeth way off as I walked
through the gardens:
this most garish gold filling in the row of many
which line the jaw of oldfangled villas down there,
can arouse the humming beehive light in the old gas-lamp.

This does not stop me from grumbling at the saleswoman
who has no tall red shades to sell me for my wall lamp,
only squat ones of oiled yellow paper with green stripes
and gold frills,
the kind just anybody has.

Her apology is smothered by the avalanche of the subway
which, if it were not six, would be taking me into town
where all kinds of lampshades can be had,
even the ones that shed the inner light
through neatly distributed star-holes.

All the same, my spoon happens to smash,
when resigned in the station buffet I stir my milk,
together with the skin the glass roof over the platform,
where Tamino is luring from the stairways and pissoirs
the cats and the dogs with their old blind men,
and with the sparks of his flute arousing from its doze
the light inside them.

Translated by Christopher Middleton

Wolfdietrich Schnurre

HANGED PARTISAN

Archangel, vii, 42

The shadow of a scythe
struck the sunflower fields.
The face of seeds,
still white beneath the bee-sweet
pollen of yellow youth,
fell with its leafy pyx on to
the stalk's fine hair, and gaping
the stem of the silvery neck
offered its wound to heaven.

O marrow light as a feather
of a broken day in July
against whose blue
the well's bucketless beam,
creaking, points to the lark
that circles, with fire in its throat,
above cottages black with soot.

DEAD SOLDIER

Now whistle to the woodlice under the stone,
so that they'll make their armour rattle
and in the tower of sand
the firebug marksman at his brengun post.
This war was started by the mouse,
its grey is only borrowed,
beneath it the mouse goes naked
and mottled, blue and bare.

Its pelt was requisitioned,
the ears were not cut off:
Now grass keeps mum
and masked, wrapped up in silence
the fungus pushes a pale shoulder
at leafmould which, bubbly, bursts.
The bald oak officer has been discharged,
dust rises in the hollow family tree,
thickens to reddish clouds.
The moss, unnourished, bleeds to death.
Splinters were fixed to broken bones;
but what was healed decays,
and only what is legless, handleless now
still dares to hope that it's alive:
the worm will win,
and the arm is losing.

Translated by Michael Hamburger

Han's Bender

SHEEP'S BLOOD

He had driven his flock into the barn. The doors were open. In the darkness, the sheep were crowding together, back by back, whitish grey, woolly, dumb hills. Their faces were gazing straight ahead, their noses, eyes, the tear-channels.

The shepherd swung the axe into the sharp edge of the block and dragged the block to the middle. He wiped the sweat away with his coat sleeve and walked over to the sheep. After three steps he stopped, turned and walked more quickly than usual across the yard into the street.

A dead street. Only a few houses were lived in, many were burnt out, cloven by stray shells from the training ground falling in the village. There were notices on the gates of the yards: NO ENTRY, UNEXPLODED BOMBS, OFF LIMITS, and white boards with black skulls on them and crossbones. Clay ran liquid in the tank tracks. The street headed far out into the plain where the training ground was.

To the right, in the last house, lived Alex, who was an army truck-driver. His olive-green truck was standing in front of the house. The shepherd walked in without knocking. Alex got up from the couch behind the table. He pressed out a cigarette in the ashtray and pushed his hands into the back pockets of his jeans.

'It's about that order again,' said the shepherd.

'What's up now?' Alex asked, sat down on the edge of the table and dangled his legs.

'I can't touch those animals,' said the shepherd.

'Nor could I,' said Alex, 'I don't like doing anything to animals like that either; I'd rather do it to some other person than to an animal.'

'If you'll come with me to the commandant again -'

'We'll get the same answer as yesterday,' said Alex. He looked at

his wristwatch and said: 'It's ten of two. I must go in ten minutes. There's an urgent run I've got to make.'

The shepherd had taken the order out of his pocket and unfolded it.

'I know what it says,' said Alex. 'The commandant says he can't change anything now. He didn't give the order. It was the commandant above him.'

'If you speak to him again -'

'He'll throw me out,' said Alex.

He took the pack of cigarettes off the table, tapped the bottom with his knuckle so that the cigarettes stood up. While he was flicking his lighter, which wouldn't light, the shepherd said: 'If you speak to the commandant again - perhaps he'll let them pasture for two, three months, at least, till the manoeuvres start.'

'You talk to him yourself,' said Alex, slipped on his jacket, zipped it, and picked up his leather gloves off the chair.

'I can't talk to him,' said the shepherd. 'You're the only person in the village he listens to.'

'Listens all right,' said Alex, 'but he's pigheaded.'

He walked to the door. The shepherd took a step back. He was still holding the order in his hand. Alex looked him in the eye, then he said: 'Try it on your own, shepherd. Perhaps it'd be just the thing, going to him on your own. Hold the order under his nose and say: 'I not kill my sheep. *Die Schafe*, sheep; *schlachten*, kill; *nicht*, not: I not kill my sheep. Get it? I not kill my sheep.'

The shepherd went out, climbed down the stone steps and stood down below in front of the truck. Alex patted him on the shoulder, hoisted himself up on to the running board and called out again: 'I not kill my sheep. Remember it?'

The shepherd didn't say anything.

'Sheep, *die Schafe*; *schlachten*, kill; *nicht*, not.'

'All right,' said the shepherd.

The motor started. The wheels turned in the mud, then gripped and the big empty crate drove off towards the training ground.

The fields on either side of the road were flooded by water from the sooty walls of drifted snow. Where the water had receded, the first green was glinting in the withered grass.

Soldiers were coming from the training ground, about a dozen of them, and there was a sergeant with them. They knew the shepherd who kept his sheep near by. They stopped and talked at him in their language, which he couldn't understand. They laughed, showing their white teeth, they took cigarette packs from their pockets and held them up to his chest.

He still had Alex's words in his ears and he blurted out: 'I not kill my sheep.'

They looked at him and shook their heads. He took the order out of his pocket and followed the lines of writing with his finger.

The soldiers took the order from his hands. They talked among themselves, they said 'sheep' and 'not' and 'kill' and because they got more and more lively and patted him on the shoulder he thought: everything will be all right now, they'll tell the commandant and the sheep will be allowed to pasture on the training ground as in past years. And if the sheep had fodder enough, they wouldn't make him kill them.

The soldiers pulled him into the bar with them. Julius had to bring him a glass of beer and a schnapps. They themselves drank glass after glass, laughed, horsing around, they dug their elbows into one another's ribs, tripped each other up, pulled chairs out from under each other. They put coins into the automat and when a handful of coins clattered down into the cup they all yelled.

The soldiers – with beer bottles stuck under their arms – walked behind the shepherd. Only the sergeant stayed behind at the round table.

Asta rushed from the house, barking. She leaped up at the soldiers, but the shepherd called her off. Wagging her tail she came creeping round his shoes.

Then the soldiers saw the sheep in the darkness, back by back, whitish grey, woolly, dumb hills. Their faces were gazing straight ahead, their noses, eyes, the tear-channels.

The soldiers took a swig each from the bottle. They took off their coats and threw them over the axe on the block. Under their jackets they were wearing white singlets. Silver chains and watches hung on their wrists, but each one also had a knife in his belt, sharp, slender, grooved knives.

The one called Ed pulled a sheep out of the darkness and up near the door where it was light he thrust the knife behind its ear into the fleece. It dropped without a sound, lay on its side. Blood oozed over the ground and the feet twitched.

The other soldiers also, one after the other, walked to the sheep and pulled them across.

The shepherd yelled out the words he had learned by heart: 'I not kill my sheep.'

'Ja, gut, we kill your sheep,' said the soldiers, and they did so as the others had done, Ed, James and John, Bill and Warren, Donald and Bert, Francis and Bruce. Each one thrust a knife into his sheep, through the fleece behind the ear.

A second sheep dropped beside the first, a third, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, a mountain of sheep. Without a sound they dropped, lay on their sides. Blood oozed over the ground and the feet twitched.

Why don't they bleat? At least they could bleat. Do they like dying? Asta pressed her head against his knee. The sergeant was yelling from the street. With his feet placed wide apart he stood there, his hands on his hips.

One after another the soldiers came out of the barn. They stuck their knives into their belts and looked down at themselves. To pacify the yelling sergeant they said: 'Only sheep's blood.'

They wiped their bloody hands on their singlets and a few went to the trough, washed their hands in the water and dried them on their trousers. They pulled on their coats and buttoned them up, the lower buttons first.

The soldiers walked over to the shepherd and shook his hand. 'Okay?' they asked.

'Yes, it's all right,' the shepherd said.

'Gut?'

'Yes, all right.'

The sergeant gave a command. The soldiers got into line and marched away to the training ground.

The shepherd kept on staring after them, till they began to sing.

Translated by Christopher Middleton

Rainer M. Gerhardt

MONTAGE 2

they ate the lotus from the scaffold
and a vineyard in their breasts
grew the milk
the idyll our weakness
the wisdom of Solomon in the same book as
Argicida
the Cretan's phrase
Ishtar endures
the land is bright with the Greeks
the bough however
with its dark shine
the swallows die
before the summer
Tammuz marched up
the valley of the Indus
Enlil the shepherd
picked up the stone
and time started in to swinging
and before the day was
Alexandria

MONTAGE 4

somehow we remain empty
not fully bailed out by this
method
the whole language
as Creeley writes
more

not metrically bound
 that falls from the scaffold
 is nicely buried by the charitable
 O sister of the Nile
 on the bank of our former captivity
 you who are brothers
 and the dead slain by rice
 the forehead adorned
 the birds in the midst of air
 the land abandoned and fallow
 silence
 from every shore
 O write
 they must
 why not you – *du*
 knowing Kitasono
 Japan land
 one ought to
 the passport to America going home
 via the Punjab and Indus valley in the tracks
 of poets
 of language
 through jungle and waste
 passing the islands
 of huge dogheaded
 birds
 meals of white mash and pap
 sprinkled with ashes
 the sails
 Francesca's
 but Dante will not let us live
 always the fields to be harvested
 always the same sky above the bent-over backs
 earth-burdened
 and in rain the house
 the long departed souls

Translated by Werner Heider and Joanna Jalowetz, and edited by Cid Corman

Eugen Gomringer

THREE 'CONSTELLATIONS'

untracked
being trackless

being trackless
lightfoot

lightfoot
being powerless

being powerless
dangerous

dangerous
being untracked

being untracked
trackless

trackless
being lightfoot

being lightfoot
powerless

powerless
being dangerous

being dangerous
untracked

Translated by Edwin Morgan

words are shadows
shadows become words

words are games
games become words

shadows being words
words become games

games being words
words become shadows

words being shadows
games become words

words being games
shadows become words

Translated by Christopher Middleton

small and yellow
unfinished
disappears
where slowly
spreading
large and green
but shining through
achieves
its figure
remains
in mind
losing ground

Original in English

Helmut Heissenbüttel

From 'TOPOGRAPHIEN'

C

incessantly in the counterflowing streams the same faces meet
the loudspeakers talk uninterruptibly
little girls' piano-playing excavates a tunnel through the years
the gulls' cry slicing my early dream is still my sister
out of the tunnels ascend the illuminated frontal planes
woodfiresky of the regions behind
open doors to disconnected railway wagons in the November sun
flattened smoke-fields over shunting yards
open-latticed mirror-images in the corrugated iron of canals
in this country of canals and bridges
the glistening parallels of the country lying before me

D

subtract days enumerate annoyances function with precision
without interest in the interest of the interested
that less can be achieved with what can be achieved than when
nothing can be achieved
the seduction of the same sort of sentence always
hiding places Benjamin Péret and Francis Picabia
inspirations transferred
surviving thoughts
everything differs from its hypothesis
the truth is my memory
I collect passers-by who speak to themselves
I signify the absence of thought in their sunken faces

Translated by Christopher Middleton

From TEXTBUCH IV

I man on I bench
 I biscuit in I hand
 I hand
 in I hand and
 I man and
 I biscuit and
 hand
 in hand and
 on I bench
 I biscuit and
 crumblings

Translated by Christopher Middleton

THE NEW AGE

when who meets whom and what he says when who meets whom
and then he says what when who calls whom what

when a cold warrior meets a cold warrior and says cold warrior when
a fellow-traveller meets a fellow-traveller and says fellow-traveller
when an ex-Nazi calls an ex-Nazi an ex-Nazi

when an intellectual calls an intellectual an ex-Nazi when an avant-
gardist meets an avant-gardist and says cold warrior when a non-
conformist meets a non-conformist and says fellow-traveller

when a fellow-traveller meets a fellow-traveller and says teddy-boy
and when an ex-Nazi calls an ex-Nazi an experimentalist and when
a cold warrior meets a cold warrior and says homosexual swine

when an intellectual meets an ex-Nazi and says homosexual swine
when an avant-gardist calls a cold warrior an experimentalist when
a non-conformist meets a fellow-traveller and says teddy-boy

when a teddy-boy meets a teddy-boy and says ex-Nazi when an experimentalist meets an experimentalist and says fellow-traveller when a homosexual swine calls a homosexual swine an intellectual

when he calls him that when he meets him and then says that when he meets him and then says that

all of them join the Communist Party and live happily ever after

CLASS ANALYSIS

a thingummy (stuffed shirt bourgeois member of the property-owning class monopoly capitalist) who regards a thingummy (stuffed shirt bourgeois member of the property-owning class monopoly capitalist) as a thingummy (stuffed shirt bourgeois member of the property-owning class monopoly capitalist) does not regard him as a thingummy (stuffed shirt bourgeois member of the property-owning class monopoly capitalist) but as something better

for that sort of thingummy is a thingummy and a thingummy who is a thingummy sees nothing in a thingummy but the thingummy and not himself and because in the thingummy he sees the thingummy that he is himself but not himself he sees something better in the thingummy

for a thingummy who is a thingummy is like that and as for his thingummybobness he never even notices that it is a thingummybobness of that kind and because he is like that and never notices it he regards his thingummybobness as something better

a thingummy of that kind is conditioned by his regarding every thingummybobness as something better his thingummybobness is conditioned by his seeing not himself in the thingummy that he is but something better and this conditioning makes him determined to rise above himself he fulfils his conditions in that his conditioning leads not to self-knowledge but to something better and if he really regarded a thingummy as a thingummy and saw himself in that thingummy he would regard it as something worse for assuming that a thingummy regarded a thingummy only as a thingummy and not as something better

but saw himself in it as something worse as something he did not want to regard himself as he would be forced to regard a thingummy as something neither better nor worse but simply as that sort of thingummy and that would really amount to self-knowledge

but that's what he does not do that's the very thing he clearly does not do and just because he clearly does not do it he is just as clearly conditioned

and so the thingummy remains a thingummy (stuffed shirt bourgeois member of the property-owning class monopoly capitalist) and regards all thingummybobs (stuffed shirts bourgeois members of the property-owning class monopoly capitalists) not as thingummybobs (stuffed shirts bourgeois members of the property-owning class monopoly capitalists) but as something better and does not change

Translated by Michael Hamburger

Martin Walser

AFTER SIEGFRIED'S DEATH

On the third day after the death of their colleague Siegfried Brache, the messengers of a firm (which does not wish to be named here) met in the corridor where the offices of the central administration are located. It was very early in the day; one might almost say it was five o'clock in the morning.

Lucius Nord had found, in the cupboard of the colleague who had died, a list giving all the messengers' names, without exception. Perhaps this list had prompted him to call a messengers' meeting. Lucius was the only messenger who, in all the years, had lost neither a hand nor an eye, nor even an ear. No wonder his colleagues considered him to be inadequate. Perhaps this feeling of inadequacy moved him to advocate the cause of the messengers more passionately than the messengers usually do.

Pushing their trolleys, the messengers cross each other's paths in the long corridors under the safeguard of their language. These trolleys, squeaking under variously dated loads of paper, are embellished by the messengers' figures – which are such as to fit no preconceptions. Sitting in the messengers' room, the messengers touch elbows and endure the disgust which must be endured when one has to spend a long time in one room with others under a common fate, without hope of any great changes coming about.

Lucius Nord, who had only taken this name on becoming a messenger, Baff, whom people called Bäffchen, and Pieter Naal – these three were the first to arrive on that third morning after Siegfried's death; they lined up the other arrivals as if they knew where each best belonged; on the list inherited from Brache they carefully ticked off name after name, they even behaved almost like the heads of department in whose offices they daily discharged their loads of paper.

Under Bäffchen's hands a semicircle was formed. He pulled this

one forward, holding him by the belt, with his fleshy right hand, and pushed with an iron left hand the next one back a hand's breadth. Around the semicircle stood, solemn and menacing, the messengers' trolleys. That had been Pieter Naal's idea. Pieter Naal was a connoisseur of the gothic feeling for fatality.

Lucius cleared his throat. A few charladies far off in the shadows began to listen. But with his unmatched hands Bäffchen turned them round and out of hand (since his left was shorter) gave them each a push in the back, so that the chars, lady by lady, slid out into the indeterminate dark. At each push he either entreated them: It's got nothing to do with you! Or he said, boastfully overrating his pushing power: Go jump in the lake.

But now Lucius Nord.

Friends, he said, the following questions. What happened when Siegfried Brache's death was announced at the meeting of heads of department? Did everyone really stand up for the minute of silence? Isn't it just hypocrisy when even the staff-manager stands up for the minute of silence in memory of Brache whom he called at every opportunity a radical messenger? How long then did the minute of silence last? Did anyone see to that? Or did everyone see to it, simply gazing at the clock, instead of thinking about Siegfried Brache? Were ironical comments made? Can the director announce the death of a messenger at all without being ironic? Will Siegfried's aunt be allowed into the building and into the messengers' room, now that he's dead? Should we answer the question as to what she's come for? Should we resist the move to restrict access to the messengers' room? Should we wait a little longer to see if the winter train timetable is going to be hung up again in the messengers' room? If it is hung there, should we protest against it? Should we argue that the timetable disturbs the necessary rest-periods of the messengers, because everyone comes crowding into the messengers' room when they're wanting to find out about trains? And if the timetable is withheld, should we also protest against that and say, for instance, that it is an old right to have the timetable in the messengers' room?

Shall we discuss the reprimand that there were too many cats in the messengers' room when Siegfried Brache's body was brought into it? Must the messengers' room always be ready to receive

colleagues overtaken by death on duty? What's in it for the cats who hang about in the messengers' room? Could anyone have prevented the cats from licking Siegfried Brache? Should anyone have prevented them? Did they do it because he was dead, or had it happened before? Why is the staff-manager interested in Siegfried's having been licked by cats? Won't he allow the dead Siegfried even that much, and all because Siegfried was a radical messenger? Why are there all these cats creeping around in the building anyway, why do they find their way straight into the messengers' room? Can it really be the sausages? Has the firm any right to inspect the messengers' cupboards? Does the firm inspect the office cupboards too? If not, then why inspect the messengers' cupboards? Is it really just because of the cats? Or do they want to find out about the aunts who are sometimes brought along by older messengers with delicate feelings? Or do they suspect that the absconded cashier is in the cupboards in the messengers' room? Or the director's vanished secretary? Is the desire to inspect merely a measure taken by the director to distract attention from the scandalous fact that his secretary has disappeared? And if that were to be the case, should the messengers help the director to get over his embarrassment? That is to say, should they voluntarily take on a part of the guilt for this disappearance, a part which cannot be allotted more precisely, in the hope that the director will someday show recognition to the messengers? But don't the messengers prove their weakness and bad conscience if they consider the director's goodwill to be necessary? Do they thereby prove that they cannot any longer base their fortunes on their achievements? Won't the messengers' enemies at once point this stratagem out? Isn't it all a question of behaving correctly at this crucial moment? But what group in the building has ever survived by behaving correctly? Should pre-eminently the messengers accelerate their end by correct behaviour? Can one ask as much of the messengers, in face of the example given by the departments? Should the messengers really become supporters of the staff-manager who envisages their decimation? Should we, as a last measure against the staff-manager, set up a Crew of the Disabled, so as to work in public for our firm? Shall the staff-manager be allowed – you'll see I'm not dodging this question of disablement – be allowed to continue treating as second-

class messengers those colleagues whose disablement is not due to the war? Is he trying to split us down the middle? Is it really just a gap in the messenger's education that for him the word 'intrigue' should be a comic foreign word? But does our unity give the staff-manager a right to call us the 'little people'? What does he mean by that? Can we tolerate the staff-manager's insistence on making into messengers those chauffeurs who are guilty of accidents, by way of punishing them? Is that contrary to our honour, or is it not? Does this not untypically increase the number of messengers who are apt to drink? Is this practice of the staff-manager perhaps a manoeuvre to undermine the prestige of the messenger status? Are we the punishment battalion of the firm? Must we put up with the staff-manager's forbidding by edict any messenger to stare at foreign guests in the corridors? Isn't that, too, a stratagem to make it hard for a messenger to further his education, a stratagem to drive out his cosmopolitanism? Why, for example, did it arouse suspicion when, at Siegfried's graveside, messengers of another firm sang a song? Aren't we allowed to be in contact with messengers from other firms?

What suspicions, in that case, must be aroused among us?

Should a messenger resign himself in the face of so many questions? Or should he deal with the questions in the manner of the heads of department? Must a messenger recognize at all that questions connected with his profession do exist? Or should he not simply maintain that it is a question of general questions, questions therefore which will still exist if the staff-manager achieves his aim, which is the extermination of the messengers? Can a messenger wish for the other side to produce the proof that these questions only arise because there are messengers? Should a messenger wish for anything at all? Or should he not manoeuvre the firm itself into the role of the wisher? Is the messenger therefore somebody who fulfils wishes, without having wishes of his own? Is he well enough paid for this? Would the question whether the director can announce a messenger's death without irony be a necessary question at all, if the messenger were better paid? Should however, on the other hand, the messenger also begin to demand more money, in order thereby to acquire greater prestige? Does a messenger need to do that? Certainly he doesn't! A messenger has, thanks to his profession, which opens to him all the

offices in the building, a healthy self-awareness. But what does his environment think? Why did the staff-manager have a notice put on the board saying that the messenger Siegfried Brache had died of heart-failure, why did the staff-manager not think it appropriate – as he certainly did think it appropriate three weeks before when the head buyer died – to speak of a heart-attack? Did he want by this to humiliate his enemy still further, our colleague Siegfried Brache, even in his death, because Siegfried was a radical messenger? Or should a messenger remain for ever unworthy of a heart-attack?

Lucius Nord spoke without manuscript or rostrum, but he had bought for his speech, with his own money, a pair of shoes with specially thick and soft soles. At each question he raised his heels and rolled forward on the balls of his feet, till he was standing on his toes, he raised his voice as his heels rose, and the new soles squeaked each time he did so, till Lucius had reached a climax and a question had reached its questionmark. Not that he had intended from the start to ask only questions. He simply couldn't find his way out of them, so he later said. The steeply aspiring melody of each question and the synchronized movements of his feet had – inexperienced speaker as he was – carried him away. There's no telling how far they might have carried him. Since people like to call a complicated juncture of events an accident, one must also say it was by accident that, on this particular morning, long before the start of the day's work, the director and the staff-manager happened to enter the building together and come down the corridor.

One can explain anything, if one wants to. The directors do, on occasion, arrive a little earlier, in order to humiliate the mass of others hurrying punctually in. Or: a messenger had placed a letter in the wrong tray, but, though a misdirected letter in a large building can hardly be put back on the right course, nevertheless, if the organization is good, the error can be traced back to the offender, and the guilty party had wished to make good his blunder and had been a Judas. In any case, down the long corridor came the director and the staff-manager; they were conversing like two great athletes with different disciplines on their way to the arena; conversing as a film-star converses with an astrophysicist. They came strolling along, relaxed, showing some of that nonchalant grace which distinguishes,

when they are together, two members of an *élite*, who – because their professions differ – cannot ever be competitors.

The almost ceremonial and (under Böffchen's collaborating hands) still immaculately intact semicircle of messengers did not frighten the two gentlemen in the least.

That might suggest there was a Judas at work. But it can also mean that these two gentlemen were not so easily scared.

And Lucius Nord? The moment he saw that the two gentlemen were on the verge of walking, with an amiable greeting, between him and his audience, he foresaw what dreadful uncertainty this would leave the messengers in, if now nothing were to happen but an exchange of good mornings and the disappearance of the chiefs behind shining doors. He did not want to be forced into the role of someone caught red-handed. Lucius had not got much time. He certainly could not get up on his toes again, but at least his heels found their way to each other, as he called out: I wish to report, Sir, we messengers are holding a discussion on revolutionary matters.

His having by-passed the staff-manager and spoken to the director filled him at once with anxiety. But the director's answer calmed him again: Bravo, my friends, carry on!

A number of messengers echoed: Carry on!

They all stared after the two gentlemen, watched each go into a different room, that is, into his own room. Then at once the semicircle broke up, they slapped each other's shoulders, one of them suggested they should sing a song, but another had already got to his trolley.

Now all wanted to get to their trolleys as quickly as possible. They ran in and out among each other, the pile of trolleys proved a great obstacle, but eventually each had found his trolley and each clung to his trolley and hurried with his trolley intently away.

Anyone meeting a messenger after this sensed a sort of festal air about him. The firm's psychologist, Dr Gander, who knew nothing, is even said to have observed, during the later afternoon, in the eyes of one or two messengers, something like a look of transfiguration.

A few days later, Lucius Nord announced in the messengers' room that the management was of the opinion that the many disabled messengers could not be expected to discuss revolutionary questions

standing in the corridor, so for holding future discussions of revolutionary questions the messengers were offered the large committee-room of the firm. When Lucius Nord then added that the management had expressly granted permission for messengers to bring their trolleys with them, there was complete silence for a few moments in the messengers' room. Dr Gander might once more have observed something like a look of transfiguration. Lucius Nord, who was still wearing the shoes with the thick soft soles, rolled from his heels on to his toes and said: My friends, what more do we want?

Translated by Christopher Middleton

Ernst Jandl

CALYPSO

ich was not yet
in brasilien
nach brasilien
wulld ich laik du go

wer de wimen
arr so ander
so quait ander
denn anderwo

ich was not yet
in brasilien
nach brasilien
wulld ich laik du go

als ich anderschdehn
mange lanquidsh
will ich anderschdehn
auch lanquidsch in rioo

ich was not yet
in brasilien
nach brasilien
wulld ich laik du go

wenn de senden
mi across de meer
wai mi not senden wer
ich wulld laik du go

yes yes de senden
mi across de meer
wer ich was not yet
ich laik du go sehr

ich was not yet
in brasilien
yes nach brasilien
wulld ich laik du go

Text by Ernst Jandl

FRAGMENT

if the resc
it will soo
the day aft
till the atombo
yes your rev

Translated by Christopher Middleton

TWO 'ENGLISH POEMS'

stilton cheese
cureth
warts
wormeth
through needles
calleth
BBC
moist soulful

sweaters uncle a frog
or an item
or perhaps little nelly
yes there is a sailingboat in me daddy
at table it can whistle like a steamship
you know that joke about no
no
no? yes
well
yes
yes?
yes. that's the joke about no
there's a nightingale in me mummy caught cold
years ago and is dead now
was she a good one
deed she was

Text by Ernst Jandl

Franz Mon

GROUNDPLAN

was visible
is visible clearly
it is more visible

than now
everything is visible

hymenoptera
hexagon
later the glaze/reflexes a

hairplait

the small glass globe the angler draws in the
line with his catch to die too small
flat across the water

exhale
skin-basrelief

heliotrope

of the children of god the daughters bore
the sons of men
bald and meek
both went into the same wave
glade lifted their heads

looked at each other
still now and then

groundplan and

fluting hollow

leaven
leaf

‘what punishment can be meted out for a deed
if a man’s part in it has not been clarified’

hindquarters bend

to meet you in this place

(eye back to front)

mouth ran/ animal for two

for three

are you dead

he is dead

now all birds are here

all birds

all

Translated by Christopher Middleton

Siegfried Lenz

LUKE, GENTLE SERVANT

To the south the grass burned. It burned fast and almost without smoke, it burned in the direction of the mountains, towards the mountains of Kenya. The fire was abroad in the elephant grass, and it had its own wind, a wind which tasted of smoke and ashes. Once a year they threw fire into the grass, the fire ran along its old routes towards the mountains, towards the mountains of Kenya, and when it reached the mountains it died down, and with it the wind died down, and then the antelopes returned and the jackals, but the grass was gone. Once a year the grass burned, and when it had burned down, the soil was ploughed, dug up and ploughed, the new ash went to join the old ash, and they threw maize into this soil of ashes and stones, and the maize grew big and had good cobs.

I turned aside from the fire and drove in a wide curve down towards the river, towards the bamboo forest. I drove slowly between thorn and elephant grass, skirting the fire, and I felt the hot gusty wind on my skin and tasted the smoke. I planned to drive along the river by the bamboo forest, I would overtake the fire, and after overtaking it return to the grassland. It was no great detour, I only had another fifteen miles to go. I would be home before dark, I had to be home before dark.

But then I met them, or they met me. I don't know whether they had been waiting for me, they lay at the edge of the river and at the edge of the bamboo forest, more than twenty men, they streamed out of the bamboo forest, silent, solemn, twenty lean men, and they had small scars on their foreheads and bodies, deadly stigmata of hate, and in their hands they held their Panga knives, short heavy choppers which they used to kill our wives and children, their own people, and their cattle. They surrounded the car, they looked at me and waited. Some stood in the elephant grass, some in front of the thorn bushes, coming no nearer though they saw that I was alone. They

held their Panga knives close to their thighs and were silent, twenty lean Kikuyu, and they looked at me gently and quietly with condescending pity. I turned off the engine and remained where I was; my revolver lay in one of the glove compartments. I could see it, but I did not dare take my hands from the steering wheel. They were watching my hands, quietly and apparently without interest they watched my movements, and I let the revolver lie in its shelf and listened to the fire running across the elephant grass in the distance. Then one of them raised his knife, lifted it and signed to me quickly, and I got out. I got out slowly and left the revolver where it was, and then I noticed the one who had motioned to me, and it was Luke, my servant. It was Luke, an old lean Kikuyu, he was wearing a pair of old linen trousers of mine, clean but torn by the thorns, Luke, a quiet, gentle man, Luke who had been my servant fourteen years. I went up to him, I said: 'Luke,' but he remained silent and looked past me, looked over to the mountains of Kenya, towards the burning grass, he looked across the backs of the fleeing antelopes and did not know me. I looked around me, peered into each man's face, probed, tried to remember desperately whether I had not met one of them before who could nod his head and corroborate that it was Luke who stood before me, Luke my gentle servant for fourteen years; but all the faces were unknown to me and repudiated my glance, strange, distant faces, shining in the close heat of the bamboo.

They opened the circle, two men stepped to my side, and I went past them, went in among the thorn bushes; the thorns tore my shirt, they tore the creased, yellow skin, they were hard, dry thorns which grabbed at me, hooked themselves into me, and broke. My shirt hung in rags over my chest. We have a name for the thorns, we call them 'wait-a-while'. I heard them overturn the car, they left it there and followed me, they did not set fire to it, they left it there and that was enough in this land of deep sleep and of decay, nobody would ever put that car on its wheels again, perhaps someone might push it into the river. I would never use it again.

They all followed me, more than twenty men went behind me; we went through the thorn as if we had a common goal, they and I.

Luke walked behind me, I heard his knife fall against the thorn branches, the branches that had been bent forward by my body and

which sprang back. Sometimes I stopped so that Luke would catch up with me, I had not yet given up the idea of speaking with him, but he always noticed my intention and slowed his step, and when I looked round he turned to look back or stared over the top of my head. I followed them as far as the river. I followed them although I went first, and when I came to the river I stopped, stopped before the flat, lazy river that I had already crossed twice, I had twice walked across in mud up to my hips, once in the war and once when the missionary had an accident. It was long ago, but I had not forgotten what it had felt like. I remained standing by the river bank, and they came and stood around me, more than twenty men with heavy Panga knives, strange, rigid faces marked with the small scars of hate. Black river-ducks paddled quickly towards the other bank, paddled away and looked back, and I stood in the circle which the river completed, stood in the centre of their silent hate. They sat down on the ground, they held their knives on their knees, they were silent, and their silence was as old as the silence of this country, I knew it, I had borne it for forty-six years. When we came from England, this country had received us with silence, it had been silent when we had built houses and divided the land, it had been silent when we sowed and harvested, it had been silent whatever we did. We should have known that one day it would speak.

A snake swam across the river, it came out of the bamboo grove, it held its head rigidly above the water, a small snake with a flat head, vanishing at last into the river bank, and I marked the place where it had disappeared. I turned my head and looked into the men's faces, I wanted to discover whether they too had noticed the snake, I wished to placate them for I was afraid of the moment when they would start to speak. I was used to their silence and therefore afraid of their speech. But they remained silent and stared in front of them, they behaved as if I were their guard, as if they had yielded to me in silence, they were silent as if their lives depended on it, and they left me standing in the middle until it was dark. I had tried to sit down on the ground, my shirt stuck to my back, my knees trembled, the heat which came across from the bamboo had made me limp, but I had scarcely sat down when Luke made a short, careless movement with his knife, he lifted the tip just a little, and I knew that I would

have to stand up. I was certain that they would kill me, and I looked at them one by one, long and thoroughly, even Luke, fourteen years my gentle servant, I looked at them and tried to find my murderer among them.

When it was dark, some of the men got up and disappeared, but they returned soon after, carrying dry thorn bushes. They threw the bushes in a heap and lit a small fire in the middle of the circle, and one of them sat near the fire and tended it.

I recalled the time I had spent with Luke, he had only disappeared two days before; I thought of his silent pride and of his tendency to complicate life. I looked at the men and thought of their ritual executions, and I remembered that they used to wrap their thieves in dry leaves and set fire to them. In those forty-six years I had heard much of their fantasies, their ceremonies of sacrifice, and their guileless cruelty: one Kikuyu has more imagination than all the whites in Kenya, but his imagination is cruel. We have tried to wean them from their natural cruelty, but we have only impoverished them. We have tried to disparage their secret tribal oaths, their orgies and incantations, and their life has become boring and empty. They don't just want to get the land back, they want to get back their magic, their cults, their natural cruelty. I had only to look into their faces to understand this, in their faces lay the thirst for their land and the nostalgia for their old soul, in all those faces touched by the black gleam of the fire. I wondered whether I should flee. I had seen no crocodiles in this part of the river, but perhaps they had only been lying in the reeds on the other side amongst the bamboo, and perhaps they had slipped into the water in the darkness. I could swim under water, I was a good swimmer despite my age, and it takes the crocodiles a little while to make up their minds to attack, perhaps I could make it.

But the men who had made a circle around me would not simply look on, would not squat silently on the ground and look on as I fled. Alarmed, I probed their faces, I was afraid they might have guessed my thoughts, but their faces were strange and immobile, even Luke's, my gentle servant's. Perhaps they were hoping I would flee, perhaps they were waiting for me to throw myself into the river – their faces seemed to be waiting for it.

Luke got up and went to the fire. He squatted down, he stared into the fire, his arms rested on his knees, an old, lean Kikuyu sunk in recollection. I could have thrown myself upon him, his knife lay in front of him, its point in the fire, just below his large, lean hands. It looked as if Luke were dreaming. Now two men stepped out of the thorn, two men I had not seen before. They were taken into the circle, two men with bare feet, in cotton shirts, they looked as if they had lived in town, in Nairobi or Nyeri. They squatted on the earth behind Luke, and all eyes were on them; they had brought rolled banana leaves with them, each of them had two large leaves, and they pushed the leaves close to Luke and waited. They were strong, well-nourished men with flesh on their ribs, they did not look like Luke and his companions who were lean and narrow-chested with thin, dangling arms. Their faces were different too, they did not have that strange, indifferent expression, a look of infinite distances, their faces were good-natured, their glance quick and probing, revealing that they had lived in a city. I saw this when they stepped into the circle. I also saw how they changed when they saw Luke before the fire: their faces changed, altered, they seemed to be reminded of distant suffering and the distance made them strange and abstracted.

Luke took the knife out of the fire. He could not have seen the arrival of the two men, but he must have known that they squatted behind him, he turned towards them on the balls of his feet, I heard the grass creak under his feet as they turned, it was the first sound he had made. Luke nodded to one of the men, and the man to whom he had nodded took off his cotton shirt and threw it behind him, and then he approached closely to Luke and squatted down in front of him, quickly, almost greedily. And Luke lifted the knife and pressed it into his shoulder-blade, it hissed when the hot iron touched the flesh and the man's body reared once, his head flew back, I saw his clenched teeth, his contorted face. His eyes were closed, the lips drawn downward. He did not moan, and Luke, gentle servant for fourteen years, set the knife against another place, seven times he set the knife against the shoulder, the chest and against the forehead. When he received the second cut, the man trembled, then he had overcome the pain. After the second wound he looked calmly at the approaching knife, offered his shoulder to the knife, stretched his

chest towards it, impatient to receive the small cuts, irrevocable signs of conspiracy, stigmata of hate. When he had received the marks, Luke motioned him back, he crawled to his place and squatted down, and Luke laid the knife in the fire and, after a while, nodded to the other man. The second man took his cotton shirt off, the knife plunged into his shoulder, it hissed, there was a smell of burning flesh, and he also became apathetic and quiet after the second time and received seven cuts and crawled back. I heard distant thunder and looked up as if there were deliverance for me in the thunder, but it did not thunder again, I only saw the fire sweeping towards the mountains. The moon came out, its reflection melted in the lazy waters of the river, the river gurgled against the opposite bank, the sound travelled back to us. The bamboo was silent.

I saw how Luke pulled the banana leaves towards him, he unrolled them carefully and I noticed a tin in one of them. He stood the tin near the fire, it was full, full of some liquid, dark and thick. Luke poured off a little of the liquid and took something out of the other leaf and I recognized that it was entrails, entrails of an animal, perhaps a sheep, he took them in his hands and divided them and threw some pieces into the tin, and then he threw grain and flour into the tin and began to sing in a low voice. While Luke sang – I had not heard him sing in fourteen years – he stirred the dough, I observed how he beat the dough and kneaded it, worked it with quiet song, a gritty dough which Luke finally took into both hands and formed into a large ball. He then pinched a small piece out of the dough ball and began to roll it between the palms of his hands, making it into a small ball. The dough was wet and I heard it squelch between his hands. Luke rolled fourteen small balls, twice seven moist dough balls and laid them in two rows before him, and when he had finished, Luke nodded to one of the men who squatted before him, and the one he had called came to him, knelt down, closed his eyes and pushed his head right forward. He opened his mouth and Luke took one of the moist balls of dough and pushed it between his teeth. The fed man's face gleamed, he swallowed, I saw how the ball travelled down his throat, he swallowed several times, his head moved back and forth, back and forth, then he stopped, his lips opened, pressed forwards in mild greed towards the next bit of

dough, and Luke pushed another ball into his mouth. Luke, sorcerer and gentle servant, fed him with the dough of hate, fed him seven times and sent him back when he had had his number, and after a while Luke nodded to the second man, and the second man came and opened his mouth and choked down the balls, choked down a vow with the dough and his face gleamed. He also ate the dough of hate seven times and was sent back. He went back upright, took his shirt, slipped it over his head and settled into the circle they had made around me. I remembered that seven was their number, the holy number of the Kikuyu, I had often heard of it in forty-six years, now I had seen it. Why had they allowed me to see it, why did they tolerate my presence, my number was a different one, I was the one for whom the wounds were meant, the fresh marks on the men's bodies, I was the object of their hatred, why did they not kill me? Why did they hesitate, why did Luke hesitate to lift the heavy Panga knife against me, why did they not allow me to die the death they had imposed on so many others, had they a special death in store for me? Had Luke, the gentle one, invented a special death for me in the fourteen years he was my servant?

We had spoken little in those fourteen years, Luke had always worked silently and well, I had even invited him to eat with us. Sometimes, when I had watched him from afar at his work I had gone up to him and invited him, but he had never come, had always found a simple excuse, he declined my offers with polite sadness. Nobody worked better for me than Luke, my wonderful servant. What kind of death had he thought up for me?

Luke got up and walked past me to the river. Slowly he walked up and down on the river bank, observed, listened, he lay down flat on the ground and looked across the water, he took a stone, threw it into the middle of the sluggish river and observed the point where the stone had fallen and waited. Then he returned and now he came up to me. He stood in front of me but his glance went past me, did not reach me, although he was turned towards me. He stood before me, his knife in his hand, and he began to speak. I recognized his voice immediately, his quiet, mild voice. He invited me to go, he spoke to me as if he were asking a favour. I should go, he begged, the time had come. With his hand he pointed across the river and the

bamboo in the direction in which my farm lay; I should go, he begged me, where Fanny lived who was my wife, and Sheila, my daughter. Luke begged me to go to them, they would need me, he said, tomorrow at sundown they would need me. I should wait no longer. I should prepare Fanny and Sheila, he said, for tomorrow the farm would burn, the great fire would come and I must not be far away then. He wanted to turn away, he had said enough, but I would not let him go, I pointed with outstretched hand at the black river, and he read my question from this gesture and gave me to understand that there were no crocodiles near by, that he had observed the water. I could go, the way was clear.

I looked around the circle of faces, strange, stony faces lit by the weak light of the fire. Luke went back and fitted himself also into the circle, he squatted and I stood alone in the middle and looked across at the bamboo forest, felt the oppressive heat drifting across, felt decay and secrecy, and I set one foot in the water and went. I went slowly towards the middle of the river, my feet sank into the soft mud, the water rose against my body, against my hips, my chest, black, tepid water, carrying dead bamboo canes and branches, and when a branch touched me I was startled and stood still. I did not look back once. I wondered why they had let me go, there must have been some reason why they should not have killed me.

What verdict lay behind their sending me home? I did not know, I could not guess it though I knew many of their tricks, their gentle, cruel cunning – why had they let me go? My foot touched a hard object which lay at the bottom, I jerked back, I would have cried out if they had not been on the bank, I threw myself on to the water and made quicker progress swimming than wading, and I swam into the middle with desperate pulls. It must have been a sunken tree that I had touched, the water remained calm, there was no movement in the river. Slowly I waded on, rowing with both arms – long groping steps through the soft mud: I crossed the river for the third time.

What trick lay behind my acquittal, why had they let me go, why had Luke sent me home? Luke had shown me the shortest way, the road lay through the river and the bamboo forest. I knew that the grasslands began beyond the bamboo, grasslands of toil. I remembered that I would then have to pass the maize fields and go past a

farm. I'd make it, I thought, I could walk fifteen miles before the following evening, perhaps McCormick would take me the last stretch in his wagon, he owned the farm.

The bamboo grew thickly, I was hardly able to make any progress but had to squeeze myself between the canes. It was hopeless. The ground was also dangerous, leaves and branches covered it right up to the bamboo bushes, I could not see where I stepped. Again and again I sank in, sank to my hips and fell forwards. It was impossible. I stood still and looked back; the men had gone, the fire was out, I was alone. I was alone in the oppressive heat of the bamboo. I felt my wet clothes against my skin, my knees trembled. I felt that I was watched, I felt that eyes were on me from all sides, indifferent, waiting, immobile stares. I had no weapons, I must go no farther.

All was silence, only occasionally the stillness was broken, a bird called in the darkness, an animal complained in disturbed sleep; I must go no farther, I knew that at night, without weapons, I would not come out of the bamboo forest alive, the leopard would prevent it, the leopard or another. I knew I must return to the river and either wait for the morning or move closer to the water. Without weapons and without fire the night was dangerous, I could feel it. The night was a little too silent, a little too gentle, it was not good, and I fought my way through the bamboo bushes and creepers back to the river. I wanted to use the night to walk up-river, this would gain me at most two miles, two toiling miles before morning, but I decided to take this road, I wanted to be home before Luke brought the big fire to the farm, I had to warn the girl and Fanny, my wife.

Again I went into the river, the water went up to my calves, then I waded, trying to make no sound, up-river; I made better progress than I had expected. The moon lay on the water, if it had not been for the moon I would not have gone on. The mud became firmer, the farther I went up-river the harder and surer became the bottom, I knocked against small stones in the water, the bushes did not hang so far over the river bank, all seemed to be going well. Sometimes I saw a pair of eyes between the bushes, green and immobile, and I instinctively strained towards the middle of the river, I was afraid, but I had to stifle my fear if I wanted to reach the farm in time. Sometimes the eyes on the river bank followed me along, cold and quiet,

they accompanied me up-river. I could recognize no head, no body, the eyes seemed to float above the bamboo, they floated through the bamboo and the creepers, and I knew that the night was lying in wait, pursuing the stranger, trying to allay his suspicion by the silence and the fragrance. I saw phosphorescent flowers on the river bank, their beauty burnt itself to death, occasionally I saw them six feet tall burning in the darkness on a tree or in the middle of a bush, burning flowers of death beneath which the leopards waited.

What trick was there in my acquittal, why had they let me go, for whom had they branded themselves with the marks of wrath? Were they so sure of themselves?

I got along well, I would be able, if things went on this way, to make a good three miles this night. I would reach Fanny and the girl earlier than they expected. I thought of Fanny, saw her sitting on the wooden veranda, listening into the darkness, the old army revolver lying on the balustrade; by now I should long have been home, perhaps she had sensed across the distance that something had happened to me. She had a good instinct, her instinct had sharpened the more solitary we two had become, this country of sleep and decay had shown us that man is by nature a solitary creature, a lost, lonely hunter on the trail of his own self, and we soon began to go our separate ways, soon after Sheila was born. Sometimes we both believed that we could do without each other, we worked silently and alone, each doing his share, we kept out of each other's way as soon as life tried to lead us together. True, Fanny and I were going in the same direction, our goal and our misery were the same, but we went towards that goal with a great distance between us. We had said everything to each other, we had confided in each other without reserve, and the time had come when we understood each other without speech, when we sometimes did not speak to each other for days, and things went on in their proper way none the less. I had often observed her secretly when she walked through the maize or clambered down the ravine to the river, I had observed her and noticed that her movements had changed, that they had altered since the early days. She moved more softly, like an animal, her movements flowed, she felt secure.

The river became shallower, a few stones stuck out of its surface,

and I jumped, whenever possible, from stone to stone and hardly had to touch the water. The water had become colder, the air had become colder, I began to feel cold. I remained standing on a stone and massaged my body and my legs. My shirt was torn over my chest, the rags dangled in my face when I bent, they smelled sweetish and musty. I carefully covered my skin with the rags, I tried to pull the shirt down to make it longer and to push it under my belt, for I began to feel colder and colder, and I longed for the warm mud, and for the part of the river where they had dismissed me from their circle. I drank a little of the bitter water and was about to go on when I saw him: he stood close to the bank in a small bay of the river, only a few yards from me. Around him the bamboo bushes had been trodden flat so that I could see his full size. He had obviously just noticed me too. He had rolled up his trunk and stood motionless, I saw the matt gleam of his tusks, the small, blank eyes, and his narrowly fanning ears: it was a large elephant. He stood and looked across at me, and I was so confounded by his look that I did not think of flight, I did not move and watched the large, solitary beast, and I suddenly felt the wonderful nearness of the wilderness. After a while he turned his head, unrolled his trunk and drank, I heard a sucking noise, heard how his trunk moved aside a few small stones which jingled together, and then he unexpectedly turned and vanished into the bamboo. I heard him break through the wood and, as if he had stopped, everything was suddenly still again.

Slowly I continued on my way, I had found a bamboo cane in the water and used it as a support when I jumped from stone to stone. The cane had been cut by a single diagonal blow, it had a point, and I would, if necessary, be able to use it as a weapon.

I thought of Luke, my gentle servant for fourteen years. I imagined that by now he would be sitting by another fire, that other men squatted before him to choke down the dough of hate that he had rolled into balls and pushed into their mouths; I believed I could see how their shoulders stretched forward, craving the heavy Panga knife, how their faces gleamed with heat and greed to receive the marks. I imagined that Luke went through the whole country, and I saw that wherever his foot flattened the grass, fire sprang up, the fire followed him constantly, changed direction with him, died down

when he ordered it – Luke, Lord of the fire. I thought of the day I had seen him for the first time: he had fled north like the others of his tribe, the rinderpest had completely destroyed their herds and they had taken refuge in the north with their last cattle. And while they were in the north we came in and took their land, we did not know when they would return, whether they would return at all, we took the fallow land and began to sow.

But after we had sowed and had already harvested, they came back from the north, I saw their silent procession coming up the long valley, the women in front, then the cattle, and behind the cattle the men. We told them that they had lost the land by their absence and they were silent; we offered them money, they took the money, hid it calmly in their clothes and were silent, they were silent because they felt themselves to be the owners of this land, for a Kikuyu considers the sale of land legal only when it has been consummated by a religious ceremony. Our giving them money was of no significance, we had staked out the land without a religious ceremony and therefore it could never belong to us. I remembered how Luke came up the long valley in one of the processions. He walked at the end of the procession, I noticed him at once. His old, gentle face struck me, a face that seemed to have had no youth, and this face remained quiet when I said that I would not give up the land. It was Luke's land that I had taken.

He was silent when he heard this, and when the procession began to move, when it went on in its silent search for the lost land, Luke went with it, and I saw him tread gently across the grassy plain, and I could not bring myself to let him go. I called Luke back and asked him if he would like to stay with me, I asked him if he were willing to work the land with me, and he nodded silently and did his work in such a natural way that it seemed as if he had only left it for a short time and had now returned to finish it.

He worked silently and patiently, I never had to say much to him. I tried to teach him this and that to make his work easier, he listened politely, waited until I left him, and before very long he had forgotten my advice. What ruse was there behind my release, in those fourteen years, what had Luke, the wonderful, gentle servant, thought up?

I went up-river until morning. The nights are long in this country and I had gained about four miles, more than I had hoped for. I examined the sky, the oblong rectangle of sky above the river. It looked like thunder. The sky was covered by a single grey cloud which stood above me and the river. Its edges were dark. Straight through the grey ran a vermilion trail, a trail of fire, and I thought that this might be Luke's track. I wondered whether, under such conditions, it was worth trying to cross the bamboo wood, then I thought of Fanny, of the girl, and of the term set for my return, and I decided to cross the bamboo forest come what may. For the first time I felt hunger, I drank of the bitter water of the river and, with the help of my bamboo pole, swung myself on to the bank. When I reached the bank I realized how exhausted I was, it had taken all my strength to jump from stone to stone, and my attention and skill had been so concentrated that I had had no opportunity to notice the degree of my exhaustion. Now that I was able to relax I noticed it, I felt how unsteady my legs were, I saw how my hands trembled, and I felt the veil before my eyes, a certain sign of exhaustion. I could not allow myself to stand still, I had to go on, I had to will myself to be carried to the farm on the impetus as it were of the effort I had made. I knew myself well enough to know that I would do it.

Bent over forward I climbed some high ground. After each step I grasped bamboo canes and roots and pulled myself forward. I had to pull myself along carefully, for sometimes I took hold of the roots of a dead tree, one that had died and still stood upright because there was no room for it to fall, and when I tried to pull myself up by the upright, dead tree, it gave, the roots broke, and the bamboo trunk fell towards me. Sometimes the trunk would fall on other trees and I heard the roots being torn up and threw myself down covering my head with my hands. From time to time I sank into the soft ground up to my knees, but not as often as in the night when I had first tried to cross the bamboo forest, for now I could see the deeper holes in the ground and avoid them.

The cold that had worried me in the early hours did not bother me any more, the exertion made me sweat, my shirt stuck to my back, and when my face was near the ground, my breath rebounded from the leaves and struck my hot face. I felt the sweat run down my

cheeks and tasted it, thin and sour, when I licked my lips. I decided to rest a while in the maize, I would neither lie down nor sit, the risk would be too great, I would stand to rest so that exhaustion would not overcome me, I wanted to stand still for a few moments and break off a cob. I was already getting near, I could already taste the sweet mealiness of the grains – it was a good thing to think of.

I approached a black cedar, I took hold of a cluster of creepers, they felt slippery and leathery like snakes, I grasped them and pulled myself towards the tree, and when I stood on a root I saw a clearing. I saw it through the veil of my exhaustion, and when I went closer I noticed a number of large, heavy birds congregated round an object. They hopped about noiselessly, lazily and with limp wing-beats they revolved around this object, some sat on it and tried to push off new arrivals. The birds were black. I was unable to drive them away, I could get so near that I was able to touch them with my bamboo staff and this I tried, but they simply hopped awkwardly aside and remained there. The object around which they crowded was a tree stump, they obviously just wanted to sit on it, and since there were too many of them, there was this silent battle.

I went close to the stump and leaned against it, and I finally succumbed to the temptation to sit down. I sat down in the middle and drove off the birds with my bamboo staff, I could not make them leave for good, they jumped to the ground, lazy and reluctant, they hopped clumsily about my legs and looked up at me with their heads on one side. After a time one bird tried to fly up on to the tree stump. I ducked, thinking he was flying at me, but when I saw that all he wanted was to sit beside me, I let him sit there and took no notice. I leaned far back and examined the sky and saw that the cloud with the vermilion trail stood farther in the west: there would be no thunderstorm, I was confident of my way. I got up slowly and walked between the big birds through the clearing. They did not move, they squatted on the ground and looked after me.

I thought of Luke's eyes, of his look full of gentle sorrow, I thought of it while I battled with the bamboo, and I began to understand Luke. To understand him and all the others who carried the stigmata of hate. I believed I understood why they crowded to

receive the marks. We had taken too much from them, but we had also brought them too much.

What trick had Luke devised? Why had he let me go, I whose fault it was that he had lost everything? I had to be at the farm before sunset, I thought of Fanny and of the girl, I saw them still on the wooden veranda, the old army revolver near by, I knew that they would not have slept last night.

When the bamboo forest was behind me, I was so exhausted I thought I could not go on, my body demanded rest, drew me towards the ground. I stood still in the middle of the elephant grass and shut my eyes, I would have given at the knees and sunk down if I had not leaned on my bamboo stick, I was so weakened that a deep indifference came over me, I ceased to care about Fanny's fate, and I appeased my conscience by telling myself that she could shoot well and would defend the house as well as I could myself. And I would have lain down if it had not been for the hunger: hunger made me open my eyes and I lifted the bamboo staff, thrust it into the ground and went on. I went through the waist-high elephant grass, my lips burned, the blood hummed in my fingers. I never once looked across the plain, my glance shrank from the horizon, I did not have the strength to lift my eyes.

Towards noon I stood before the maize field. I threw away the bamboo staff, now it had served its time, I threw it from me in a great arc, and tore off several corn cobs. I sat on the ground. I laid the cobs down on my knees, I tore the yellowish dry husk from one cob and bit into it, I did not take the time to chew off the grains but drove my teeth along the cob. The grains tasted of sweet flour.

After I had eaten, I crawled between the maize plants. I felt the coolness and shade, felt a strange sense of security: here, in the maize, I imagined myself safe. I crawled through the whole field. I imagined, while I crawled, that I was collecting new strength, I felt myself gaining strength and I lifted my eyes and looked ahead. And through the maize plants I saw the farm, it stood on a hill, the large house with a veranda, and the corrugated iron sheds at right-angles to the house. The farm lay there, deserted. McCormick had four dogs, and I had always seen one of them when I had passed by, one of the dogs had always lain in the dust in front of the veranda, but now I could

not discover any of them. I wanted to leave the maize field and go across, I had already stood up, when they came out of the farm. There were six men, lean Kikuyus with Panga knives, they walked slowly down the veranda stairs, slowly, with quiet steps. They did not seem to be in a hurry. For a moment they disappeared behind the corrugated iron sheds, then I could see them again, six lean men, they crossed the yard and passed a group of trees, they walked upright across a piece of grass in the direction from which I had come, their road led them to the bamboo forest, to the river. I could not see whether Luke was amongst them, they were too far away, I could only sense whether he was amongst them – my senses confirmed that he was. I looked after them until they vanished beyond the grass patch, I knew that it was useless to go to the farm and ask McCormick for his car, I would never again be able to ask him for anything. I was sorry for him, for he had only been there six years. He had come directly after the war, a friendly, red-haired man who liked to talk, and who vanished for a month each year, went to Nairobi, it was said, where he disappeared mysteriously for a month.

I could see no one on his farm, and I pushed myself back into the maize field and promised myself to come back once I had settled everything at home. If I had had my gun or even my old army revolver, I would have gone across to the farm, but without a weapon, and exhausted as I was, it would have been foolish. They might have left one of themselves behind, they might all six return, it was no use.

I crawled in the direction of the small path which bordered the maize field on one side, the path that led to my farm. The hardest part of the journey was behind me, I did not doubt that I would reach my farm in time. The nearer I came the greater became my fear of their cunning and my suspicion concerning my release. Why had Luke allowed me to go, Luke, gentle servant and sorcerer, what trick had he devised for me? Fear made me stand up amongst the maize, I pushed forwards with my hands and began to run as best I could. I ran through the field, stood still, listened, heard my heart beating and ran on again. I felt how my thighs became cramped, turned stiff and without feeling, on my chest I noticed the marks of thorns, small, blood-encrusted scratches. My arms trembled. My

mouth was open, the upper part of my body was bent far forward: thus I ran on through the maize, and when I reached the end of the field I did not allow myself any rest, I ran to the road, I believed I was still running, I heard my steps pounding against the ground and I thought I was running, but if I had been running I would have reached my goal much more quickly. I staggered forward, beaten down by fear and heat. I could hardly control my steps.

Then I reached another field of maize, long before sunset, and this was my own maize. Behind it lay the farm, one last effort and I would reach it, already I imagined seeing it before me, though the maize still hid it from sight, my farm, Luke's farm. I turned from the road and ran through the maize, the bushes seemed stronger and higher, the cobs larger than those in McCormick's field – I ran to a furrow. Perhaps Luke, perhaps I had torn it in the soil? I had underestimated my strength, now I felt how much I still had at my disposal.

I saw the bushes grow lighter, this was the end of the field. I stepped out of the maize field. I pressed my hands against my chest. I lifted my head and looked across towards the breadfruit trees. The farm was gone. It was long before sunset. I went towards the breadfruit trees and saw the ashes. I kneeled down and felt them with both hands. The ashes were cold.

Translated by Kathrine Talbot

Nelly Sachs

IN THE BLUE DISTANCE

In the blue distance
where the red apple road meanders
with rooty feet scaling the sky,
longing is distilled
for all who live in the valley.

The sun, lying on the verge
with magic wands,
commands the travellers to stop.

They stand
in the glassy nightmare,
while delicately the grasshopper scratches
the invisible

and the stone transforms its dust,
dancing, into music.

ONE MAY COME FROM FAR

One may come
from far
whose language
hides its sounds perhaps
under a mare's whinnying
or
the twitter
of young blackbirds

or
also like the rasping shriek of a saw
which cuts all nearness to pieces –

One may come
from far
moving like a dog
or
perhaps like a rat
and it is winter
then dress him up warm
or it may be
he has fire under his footsoles
(he rode perhaps
on a meteor)
be sure not to grumble then
if the carpet is holed and screams –

Always a stranger has
his homeland in his arms
like an orphan
for which perhaps he is seeking
no more than a grave.

Translated by Christopher Middleton

Günter Kunert

FILM PUT IN BACKWARDS

When I woke
I woke in the breathless black
Of the box.

I heard: the earth
Was opening over me. Clods
Fluttered back

To the shovel. The
Dear box, with me the dear
Departed, gently rose.
The lid flew up and I
Stood, feeling:

Three bullets travel
Out of my chest
Into the rifles of soldiers, who
Marched off, gasping
Out of the air a song
With calm firm steps
Backwards.

WORRIES

He who decides to live
Must know why last night
He woke up, where
He is going today through the streets,
For what purpose he will whitewash
His room tomorrow.

Was there a scream?
Is there an aim?
Will the place be safe?

THE WINDOW HAS BLOWN OPEN

Still no light in the sky. Smoke
In the air. Outside on the gravel
A figure.
Unrecognizable. Wrapped in mist
And twilight.
Knocks at the black, cracked wood
Of your door.

And if you ask the name of whoever it is
Rapping on your house, a voice will say:

The one you drove out of your life
Like useless ballast.
The one you poured away
Like old dishwater.
Whom you allowed to go dry
Like the lilac in the heat
Of noonday.
Who is always dying. Always returning.

I am called truth.
Nothing stops me: not the wood
Of your door. Not the door of your room.
Not the skin of your flesh. Not
The bone roof over your brain.
I am coming in.

Like the sunrise.
Like the day which nothing can stop
From coming.

Translated by Christopher Middleton

Hans Erich Nossack

THE MARKER

Around the seventh week after our departure, we saw in the distance something which looked like a marker someone had put up. We stopped short. The dogs too noticed it and pointed their noses in that direction. It stood in the middle of the endless, monotonous snow-plain which we had been crossing for days. By chance the visibility was quite good, though there was no sun. The marker did not therefore throw a shadow, as far as could be judged from a distance. But the blizzard had stopped. As a matter of fact the wind had dropped noticeably in the last hours.

‘After all!’ murmured Blaise, more to himself than to me. For it was not usually his way to express an opinion immediately. I understood what he meant. We had been told that others had made the attempt before us, and that they had never returned. Nobody, of course, knew anything definite if one inquired. We took it to be a fairy tale told to frighten us from our undertaking. Such fairy tales always grow up when something is deemed impossible. And what if they simply didn’t come back because they found something better, I’d once said when confronted with this by some worthy.

This was foolish, for it created the impression that we were after ‘something better’. But I was irritable in those days before we made the final decision.

‘Let’s go. Might as well take a look at the snowman,’ Patrick called finally. He clicked his tongue, and the sledge dogs began to pull.

It took us a good hour to reach it. Distances are difficult to judge when there is nothing else there. But when we got there we realized immediately that this was indeed a man who had been snowed up. We left everything and knocked the snow from his head and shoulders. The dogs scratched around below, but gave up sooner than we did. The man had obviously lost all smell. His hands were

in the pockets of his jacket. As to his bearing and looks, he might just as well have been one of us, but that is nothing to go by. Anyone who wants to get this far has to take the climate into account. One wouldn't dress much differently in a hundred years than this man or us.

What surprised us most was that he stood upright. None of us would have thought it possible that one could freeze to death standing up. We'd taken it for granted that one would fall down beforehand, or that one would lie down from fatigue. That was what one was most warned against. And now, imagine, this man stood erect on his legs without leaning on anything. For what could he have been leaning on? We didn't even dare to lie him down, for fear of breaking him in half. We had, of course, realized the possibility of freezing to death, but this was really pretty peculiar.

I took great care to free his face from the mask of hard snow that had grown to his cap, his eyebrows and the stubble of his beard, just as happened to us occasionally. The others watched me and waited; this job could only be done by one person, and they left it to me. I had to be careful not to spoil anything. I patted his face gently with my gloves. His eyes were closed and his eyeballs hard as marbles.

'No wonder,' I said. 'He had no snow goggles on, that's why he screwed up his eyes.' But even so it was no longer possible to conceal the fact that the man was smiling. Not now and about us – what nonsense! – but from the very beginning. And it wasn't that he bared his teeth as the dead tend to do. That is no smile. No, this one really smiled with the corners of his eyes and his thin, colourless lips. Barely noticeably. One's first thought was that one was mistaken, but when one looked again it was definite enough. It was the smile of someone who thinks a beautiful thought just to himself, and doesn't know that it has made him smile. On the contrary. With someone watching one wouldn't smile like that. For people would ask about it then, and this makes it awkward since one has no answer to their question. But this man was frozen, and so we saw it.

I don't know what the others thought. But why should their thoughts have differed from mine? I can best express it by saying: we suddenly felt a little foolish. And that is bad. It is much worse than simply feeling frightened. As if by agreement we behaved more

quietly than usual. It would, for example, have been just like Patrick to have thumped the man on the back and greeted him with a loud: 'Hello, old boy, well we've caught you out this time. You may well laugh.' Or something like that. But nothing like it happened. And not out of respect for the dead (or for death, as they used to call it!). We've seen enough corpses in our time and are used to them. I believe it was absolutely due to the smile. It forced us to behave in a more circumspect manner. But one must also remember that we had extremely exhausting weeks behind us, and that we were in no mood to smile, though plenty of jokes were cracked of course, as is only proper.

That day we went no farther. It was only noon, and normally we wouldn't have allowed ourselves to camp already. But there was no need for a decision, it just happened. We left that man standing there just as he was, and pitched camp about a hundred yards away. Exactly as usual. Every one of us had his fixed tasks so that everything went quickly without wasting time with having to think what to do. The tent was put up and the spirit-stove lighted. The dogs were given their dried fish, and after each had swallowed his share, growling, they curled up in the snow. For they took advantage of every free minute to sleep, muzzles between their back legs. In the meantime we'd got ready too. The tins of beans and bacon were heated. Our cod-liver oil capsules were distributed as usual, and we squatted in the tent to eat. We always took our time over this, it allowed us to rest. There never was much talk, so that silence wasn't unusual. Only when the rum bottle was passed round, and everybody took a swig, one of us hesitated, I can't remember who, as if he thought it more polite to drink to the man out there. 'It'd do him a lot of good,' he said. It gave us an unpleasant feeling that he should be standing out there and smiling, while we sat in the tent enjoying our soup and rum. But nobody took it up. What could we do about it after all, it wasn't our fault. He could have just stayed at home.

After the meal, and after we had cleaned the dishes in the snow and packed them up again, the other three crawled into their sleeping-bags as if everything were just as usual. Blaise took up his instruments which he had carried all this way to measure the temperature and air humidity every day, and to work out the geographical location. And

I don't know what else. I didn't understand much of it, but I used to help him with it, entering the figures he dictated into a notebook with columns. And we did the same today.

Blaise took these figures very seriously. I had often teased him about it. What concern of ours is the geographical location? Fundamentally it's of no interest to us. And even if we were to assume that someone were to see the notebook – and this was in no way our intention – what would happen then? People would include the figures in their encyclopedia and feel proud to have taken another step forward. But they'd done so only in theoretical knowledge. These figures won't help anyone to take even half a step, for in the final resort nobody knows what to do with them. I'd also made fun of the vitamin tablets. They only sterilize us against reality, I'd said. But Blaise did not allow himself to be disconcerted. He thought one ought to use every up-to-date invention even if one were convinced that it was only relatively useful. Those we call savages also have their little remedies to make it possible to endure superhuman hardship. But I could never help feeling that Blaise was so conscientious about his figures only because it gave him some support. On the other hand I believed that we could get on faster if we didn't look back at all. Blaise called this inverted romanticism.

But all this had been said often enough – it was almost part of the act of digestion – and this time I said nothing. I am convinced he noticed it, but he said nothing either.

'It's getting clearer all the time,' he said when we had finished with the figures. And indeed one could see this without instruments.

We took no notice of the frozen man. We strolled back to the bags of provisions which we always packed around the tent to give it added support. In this way we would also notice immediately if the dogs were to attack them. For one had to be for ever prepared to find them overcome by their greed. Blaise kicked his foot against the sacks several times, and I imitated him. All without a word. Then we crawled into the tent and smoked a cigarette. This was an additional cigarette, for we did not have many: two each per day. At first we'd been a bit extravagant.

We thought the others were asleep, but this was not so, or the smell of tobacco woke them. For suddenly one of them asked from

his sleeping-bag: 'Well, and what are we going to do with the fellow?'

The voice sounded angry, he cleared his throat several times after he had spoken. It was clear that the others too were listening. There was no avoiding a discussion on the subject.

Blaise did not answer straight away. It was very quiet in the tent for some time. Nobody urged him on, there was no hurry.

'We'll photograph him tomorrow,' he said finally.

'And then?' came the question from the sleeping-bag.

'We might try to hack away the ice from under his feet and lay him down. It's all the same to him whether he stands or lies, it would be just for the sake of tidiness. Don't let's fool ourselves.' And after a pause he added: 'The man is not so important.'

'And then?' the persistent voice asked.

'And what if we hadn't come upon him?' Blaise exclaimed. He lost his patience but immediately pulled himself together. For it was a stupid reply since we had after all come upon him. 'The only important thing,' he said, trying to sound as calm and practical as usual, 'is that we are sitting in our tent exercising our common sense to consider how far we've got.'

'A funny reason for such thoughts, a frozen man!' This time it was Patrick who spoke. It was supposed to sound sarcastic.

'Just because he is frozen to death and we are not. I'm not blaming him, it's his concern. We have at any rate provided proof that one can get this far without freezing to death. It isn't much, but then we didn't expect much. Taking into account all the prophecies made to us, we should have been frozen long ago.'

'But how did he get here?' somebody asked.

'And how did we get here? If someone were to find us here in ten or a hundred years, they'd ask an equally stupid question. By sledge or on foot quite simply. Probably on foot. The man is no symbol. Perhaps he imagined himself as such, and when nobody would accept him at his own value he just came here. A cheap excursion, but he can't fool us. Nor can his pose. Those are all sentimentalities. If we'd wanted to go in for that sort of thing, we should have stayed at home where there are plenty of customers for it.'

If I had taken part in the conversation, I would certainly have

mentioned the smile, for it seemed to me the most important point. But since the others didn't mention it, I let it be, and preferred to listen.

'Couldn't one thaw him out?' someone asked.

'We need our bit of solid meths for ourselves.'

'I once read a story about a woman encased in ice,' Patrick said. 'In a block of ice from the ice-age. When it was melted, because they wanted the body, it dissolved into slime.'

'But he may possibly have a paper with notes in his pocket,' the other suggested.

'And what'll we do with those?' asked Blaise.

'They could provide us with some explanations.'

'About that poor icicle?'

'Or his name and his why and wherefore. Perhaps he hasn't been standing here such a very long time. Then we could let people know about him.'

'And who please?' asked Patrick.

'Any relations, a fiancée or someone.'

'Those birds are smarter than you,' Patrick scoffed, 'they don't hang around long, but look for something else if one doesn't return. And they're right. Where would it all lead.'

Everyone laughed and began to talk about girls, the way it goes. Blaise and I crawled into our sleeping-bags. Slowly the others stopped talking as they were tired, and it became silent in the tent.

Outside too it was very quiet. I waited several hours until I thought it was night. Then I pushed the cap up from my ears and listened. They all seemed to be asleep. Over where Blaise lay nothing stirred either. Carefully I crawled out of the sleeping-bag, taking a long time since we lay almost on top of each other because of the confined space and also for warmth. But I succeeded without anyone waking. When I had opened the tent flap which closed the entrance, I was so startled I let it fall again. Outside it was bright moonlight, I hadn't considered that. But nobody seemed to have noticed, and I slipped out quickly. Fortunately the dogs didn't mind. I was on good terms with them.

There was no breath of wind. We had been fighting against a gale for seven weeks without interruption; sometimes it was stronger,

sometimes weaker, but there was always a roaring pandemonium. The more surprising was the silence. It was inconceivable. I almost lost my balance leaning forward as I'd been accustomed to doing. A three-quarter moon stood motionless in the sky. As if it had drunk up all the winds and clouds and was now busily digesting.

I went over to the man and sat down opposite him in the snow. I wanted to enjoy his smile all by myself. Now he threw a definite shadow. The ice-crystals in his beard glittered. He was still smiling, and his smile was in fact easier to discern than in daylight. His face was like a landscape that appeared very familiar to me. Bushes and valleys, all as it should be. Any moment now a nightingale might begin to sing or a screech-owl wail. I pondered deeply where that could have been. If I could only remember, I would be able to say, without seeing his documents, where the man came from. But Blaise was nevertheless right, it was quite unimportant. For people like us, someone's origin was of no consequence. It only impeded progress. This man too was not looking back. He smiled in the direction we wanted to go.

Perhaps he can see something, I thought and stood up. It might be possible, for example, that somewhere in the distance others like him stood, at regular intervals like telegraph poles, a whole chain to guide one. But I saw nothing but the naked, endless snow plain.

I imagined that I myself stood there, a few hundred miles farther on. Frozen, of course, but still. . . And I tried to smile but I didn't succeed. I thought and thought, faster and faster, for I didn't want to give up thought, that was the last thing to give up, and yet I knew there wasn't anything left to think about. I even sweated under the arms, despite the cold. I would have liked to have cried out; it would have been a great relief.

When I turned round to smash the infamous smile from the fellow's face – for there was nothing else about that could be smashed – I almost hit Blaise who stood behind me. The blow missed him, I staggered and he caught me.

'Let go of me,' I shouted, furious.

'I'm not holding you. Why should I,' he said and freed me. 'I might even allow you to assault me without defending myself, for the sake of the animal warmth it might generate. But how long

would it last? All our actions here are nothing but a flight into activity for which we then have to invent a reason without believing in it. That is the effect of the debilitating lack of resistance in this world around us. We have gained some knowledge about ourselves, and that was, after all, our aim.'

'It would be better if you didn't talk so much,' I said.

'Of course it would be better. But what do you take me for? I'm not like that one with his smile. No, don't smash him. He can't help it. Also, it'd spoil the photograph I want to take of him. He seems to me to be made of the stuff gods have always been made of. And for that there is always a demand. We'll show people the picture and say: We've discovered a frozen God. He went away from you because you didn't believe in him enough. But he isn't angry with you, for, look: he smiles. Your lack of faith gave him the opportunity to become a god.

'No, that last sentence had better be left out. A beautiful myth, no? Truly reason enough to smile. But not for us, my icy darling. The consolation a god uses for his solace is not enough for us. Because the delight induced by the feeling of having sacrificed oneself for others does not come up to the infinite delight that brought us here: to try at last to sacrifice oneself for oneself – to the very end.'

'Do be quiet. I know in advance everything you are going to say,' I begged, to stop him.

'So much the better. That'll save us a diatribe which that one wouldn't understand anyhow. To business. We have provisions for a bare two weeks. To get back to the nearest depot will take us two weeks if nothing goes wrong. But presumably we would have to decrease the rations. True, you were against laying the depot. But we couldn't have brought the stuff, we wouldn't have got even this far. We could, of course, go on for another two or three weeks, with what we have got. Do you think there is any sense in it?'

'There can be no return,' I said.

'Don't answer so quickly. What I want to say can't be said twice. What we thought yesterday doesn't hold any more. It isn't so much this man who has made me stop short, but the absolute stillness into which we have wandered. A completely new situation. There's absolutely no resistance now, that is frightful. Do you hear me? I

say: frightful. I have to admit it quite calmly. It was probably the same thing that finished off that fellow. Very likely he'd already lost his nerve. Well, that can happen to anybody. He had probably run away from his people. . . . Why didn't you run away for that matter? When you crawled out of the tent I took it for granted that was what you intended. And I gave you time enough to do it, idiot. Then everything would have been simpler. All right. Presumably it was the much reviled vitamin pills that prevented you from doing it. The chance has gone anyhow. For both of us. We must, however, come to a decision. The others will do what we decide, otherwise they wouldn't be asleep now. They'll be only too glad to turn back. They are talking a lot about women, and that is a sure sign. But I think they are decent enough to come on with us for the sake of our comradeship, and freeze to death together. All five of us. Is it worth while since this fellow has anticipated us? There isn't any need, surely, to do it twice. Even five can't add to that.'

'The other is impossible.'

'What? Return home?'

'Yes.'

'Great news,' Blaise jeered. 'As if we hadn't known that beforehand. As if we hadn't for that very reason left the spawning-places of great sentiments, their surfaces so covered with slime that all clear vision was gone. Return home, an aphrodisiac. To crawl back to the altars. And into bed with the girls. Who is talking about a return home? I am talking about defeat.'

'Do you think our snowman has a piece of paper in his pocket? I don't altogether trust him. He quite looks like someone who wouldn't admit to himself that he has been defeated. And such people tend to burden the world with their infinitesimal past. Don't the failures account for everything that is said and written? Look at me! But let's forget about him. Trying to explain him, we only explain ourselves. Even his vertical position is nothing new. It isn't as if we hadn't all tried it a hundred times, at night, in our own rooms, when there was nothing to distract us. When all around us the neighbours were warming themselves in the vapours of their own bodies. Enough. For what else is left for us? To lose our nerve? That may have been all right once. One learned from it, and if one

was lucky one became a saint. But unfortunately it doesn't conform to the evolution of our brain any more. It would become a botched job. I have therefore decided to become one of the defeated. Everything else is so possible that I suspect it, and therefore all that is left is the most impossible: to go back to the point where I can lead the life of a failure without causing suffering to anyone else. As far as I am concerned even back to the altars and the girls. If they need me to confirm their existence, why not? After all, they want from us what they can make use of, and that we can easily spare them. But shall I be able to do it? For on that depends whether we shall one day have matured enough to enjoy this beautiful silence.

'But I feel so miserably chilled to my very soul that I am afraid I might freeze anything I touch in the future.'

'Come,' I said, and helped him up from the snow. And then I told him that it was for his sake that, earlier, I had not run away. But I don't think he heard me since I spoke in a low voice, of course.

'You know,' he began again, 'perhaps our friend isn't smiling at all. It may just be a muscular reflex, and we only imagine it. Or is it possible that he just wanted to sing himself some lullaby – mirror, mirror on the wall, or some such – just to hear his own voice, and a snowflake fell on his tongue. Oh, how much I would have liked to have moved that marker a few yards farther on.' Now the moon stood behind the frozen man and shone on Blaise's face.

'What's up?' I exclaimed, startled. For I saw that he was making silly faces.

'I tried to imitate his smile,' he said. 'It mightn't show up properly in the photograph. And one might possibly be able to use it some day to make some poor creature happy.'

I took his arm. We were so wrapped in wool, leather and fur, we felt like two rag dolls. There was no sign of a human body inside there. But our movements were the same. And so we went back to the tent.

Tomorrow the wind will be at our back, I thought, and Blaise probably thought the same. Why should we speak.

I wrote this down as best I could many years later.

Translated by Kathrine Talbot

Günter Kunert

THE POLISH TREE

There was a tree that stood outside the little town of Kielce but still in sight of it, not a famous tree at all, far from the world, always on the fringe of history.

Out of the foliage which clasps it, the deep green pinnacles, it is said, you can hear on some days a sound of weeping, like children's voices, when the wind blows through the tree, cries and whimpering, sighs which end in rattling sounds, in breathless silence. Not everyone, they say in Kielce, has the right ears to hear what sounds are being made in the trembling branches.

A German scientist, armed with a tape-recorder, lurked for a long time under the huge crown of leaves, without being able to record anything acoustically peculiar; and he assigns to the realm of fable what is said about the tree and the children. He says: apart from the oak-tree and two jays, everything else is scientifically baseless.

REPORT

This concerns the describing of a procedure from whose conduct one gains deep folkloristic and sociological insights into the structure of the society in which it occurs. It will at once be seen that the reporter, thanks to the analytic precision of his language, is able to grasp and present with clarity the salient and essential features of the occurrence.

Thus he describes the framework which is 2.65 metres high and is made of the best quality oak; it can be dismantled and it is kept in its requisite shape by exactly sixty screws. Since it is used in all weathers, it is impregnated against decay and fire with a special substance, and it gives off a strong clinical smell.

The mechanism, an invention of genius, releases at the moment a

lever is pressed an instrument with a sloping edge which drops rapidly down two parallel rails. Only the best metal has been utilized, from a foundry with one of the richest traditions in the country.

The reporter writes enthusiastically of the crew which operates the instrument; a small but expert team which makes no mistakes and can look back on a series of international successes. Usually it performs in public, as on this occasion, when the reporter observes a commotion among those involved, from the gateway of the big building through a portcullis, across to the instrument, a grouped marching, headed, this does not escape him, for a definite goal. When things are quiet again, he writes, the horizontal board is provided with its proper load, fastened with thongs of dark shining leather, which secure those parts that are always in danger of becoming uncontrollably agitated. Now the board is pushed forward, under the upright narrow framework, at whose base, at the same moment, a wicker basket is positioned.

Before the proceedings begin, as the reporter appositely states, he notes exactly how the director of the operation makes a signal: raising his right hand to the level of his face, and then dropping it with an energetic jerk. And in order that the atmosphere of the whole thing may be felt through a few local details, after the heart of the matter has been described the reporter notes in conclusion: The sun is shining. A moderate west wind. It will be a fine day.

Translated by Christopher Middleton

Uwe Johnson

BERLIN, BORDER OF THE DIVIDED WORLD

I would like to discuss some of the difficulties I encountered in describing a Berlin Interurban Station. A man, one among many, steps out of a train that has just pulled in, crosses the platform, heads towards the street exit. An everyday occurrence with slight variations. I saw, or rather I watched this endlessly, so I thought I might write about it. The novel I was working on needed something to interrupt its flow. I wanted four connected sentences as a kind of bulk, to stand out from the rest, to suggest a pause. A man getting off a train seemed to serve this purpose. But it didn't fit into either one long or four short sentences, so I substituted another incident that produced the same effect. After a while it annoyed me that this simple scene in the station refused to symbolize Berlin and I tried to make a whole story of it: to describe just that. That's when I ran into difficulties.

The name Berlin suggests a big city. Several million people continuously occupy a space that may be defined either geographically or politically. They use facilities that don't exist in rural areas: statistics or a look from a plane show it as an agglomeration of apartment houses, factories, streets, parks, radio towers, church spires, all jammed up one against the other. In the midst of all this, individual activities span longer distances and most of them converge on a central point. The big city produces and markets objects of everyday need, as well as services, news, and cultural attractions to satisfy a wider range of demand; it maintains contact with the outlying districts as well as with other cities. Its social structure is complex in proportion to its size. Nationality, history, landscape, and climate give it its unique characteristics, but do not change its overall definition. Nowadays (considering the stage of technical development) one assumes that any large city has its electric transit system with independent tracks above and under ground, trains running

from station to station. One of these trains stops, trades passengers with the platform, a man gets off, walks in the crowd towards the exit up or down stairs to the street. A simple enough occurrence. Appropriately described it should seem understandable, casual to anyone acquainted with big-city life, whether from direct or indirect experience.

The border cuts through this concept. We cannot count on people's knowledge of it. They do not know, of course, that the former German capital sits like an island enclosed by the East German State, an island that is, in turn, divided. Around the half under U.S., British and French army control, the former city limit has hardened the way live skin can grow horny and stop breathing. It is economically and politically isolated. The periphery of the other half, under Soviet army control, participates in the life of the surrounding countryside. Wherever the two territories touch, the victorious nations have placed German police on their respective sides of the border to check papers and belongings; anything the police permit or fail to notice may cross. Also known are a few surface aspects of this situation: Barbed wire. Chicken wire. Toll gates. In wooded lanes, at street corners, canals, men in uniforms of different cut and colour stand facing each other in pairs or in groups, check a person's pass, let him walk across the no-man's-land to the differently clad authority who receives the pass as though it came from nowhere. A man whom a speeding car whisks across the border is beyond reach for the other side. Heat and frost have furrowed the streets that serve as border, weeds push out of the cracks. Sometimes a mere doorstep divides a sidewalk (in one sector) from a house or a restaurant (in the other sector) where a different currency pays the check. Anybody can get arrested going around a corner no cat would hesitate to turn. The border inside a city is a unique phenomenon; it looks so extraordinary that one is tempted to accept it as something finite, whereas it merely shows the present development of a situation that can change and whose history is fifteen or twenty-two years old. And its name is misleading. There is no 'Berlin'. There are two Berlins, comparable as to buildings and population. To speak of 'Berlin' is to be vague, or rather it is to make a political claim which both

Eastern and Western blocs have been making for quite some time now, each calling the half under its influence by the name of the whole, as though the other half did not exist or had already been incorporated into its own. The difference in laws that ought to be mentioned at this point cannot be understood from so imprecise a name. And so, one of the trains of the city transit system starts at the end of the line in a borough in East Germany, at the city limit it stops and is searched, it enters West Berlin and runs through it for a while until it reaches East Berlin, is searched again because it is about to re-enter West Berlin, it makes several stops in West Berlin stations, and now (for instance) a young man gets off. He got on (for instance) in the borough outside the city, in the meantime he may have shown his pass twice and opened his brief-case to have it checked, here he leaves the train which, in turn, leaves West Berlin after a while and enters East German territory to be searched. A different passenger has taken the young man's seat.

If these conditions deserve to be understood in their proper terms it is not because they are picturesque and complex, but because they represent the border of the divided world: the border between the two systems that regulate living in the world today. The other territorial borders between the hostile armies have become petrified into military demarcation lines that block all exchange. On either side life has its separate blood-stream. Berlin, on the contrary, is the test sample of the meeting of the two systems. You can't dig a moat through a living city and completely sever its internal relationships, one half still has not become the ghetto of the other. Inside this test sample two contradictory government organizations, two economic set-ups, two cultures live so close together that they can't lose sight of one another; they have to come into contact. This kind of proximity requires precise comparison. The fiendish political abstraction to which the city is being subjected in the guise of language regulations diminishes its value as a test sample. All that seems symptomatic of the division or reunification of a nation can also be symptomatic of the hostility or agreement of the world's two camps. I'm not merely trying to justify my subject. A border in this spot creates a new literary form. It requires adapting technique and language to the extraordinary situation. The conventional term for a passenger who

gets off at a (so to speak) foreign station and stays there for a longer period requires the label 'refugee' for propaganda purposes; under this name, he stands for the advantages on the one, the disadvantages on the other side of the border. Whereas he may merely have moved to a new address. Political partiality which places the traveller in an immediate relationship to a power does not see enough of him and may go wrong even in what it does see; besides, partiality involves means for mass annihilation which have no literary place or function in the description of an interurban station and a casual passenger in a way illustrative not only of his new life, but also of the one he has left behind and which is, at that very moment, changing rapidly.

So long as a literary text of this kind is concerned with truth, its subject must be checked against two contradictory tendencies of truth-finding. We know some of the sources of error in the collecting and transmitting of news: eyewitnesses who didn't look too closely, who can't say what they didn't see. They make up something that seems to round off the incident. Or they quietly arrange the situation according to their habitual points of reference, which may be private or of sectarian morality or party politics. Press, radio, television and city gossip make additional changes in the material that has already been prepared for them. To some extent they depend on the interpretation which the first reporter gave to the incident with an adjective. They all damage reality (provided this word still applies), according to their special technical bias, by one or more dimensions. These personally or technically induced errors grow in complexity and become a rigid pattern the moment they are combined with the even more prolific source of error which political bias provides. Each side of the border has its pattern. Obviously the criteria for one cannot be applied to the other. Just as obviously the reliability of one pattern cannot be established on the basis of retractions for instance forced upon the other pattern, or on proofs it manages to come up with by itself. Only to a certain extent can the surface phenomena of the pattern be extended to include the interests of the government, the political faction, the economic group to which the information service (pattern) is tied by force, assignment, desire to live. What do they want of an able-bodied young man who is changing residence; what are they planning for him? However, there is no regularity to

these interests, their expression shifts with the changing general condition; there is only temporary permanence by which to judge: a case today may be decided differently from the exact same case yesterday. Also, these interests, deep down, are hardly so benevolent, helpful, trustworthy that one would want to surrender to them completely, faithfully, and be blind to the opposition. Even in short-term alliances – not considering its multiplying effect – a kind of corruption may set in, in the name of reasonable (now necessary) concession. Also, an investigation of these interests produces ambiguous results that are only rarely correct since their intentions need not follow straight lines or be determined by causality, since the tactics behind a plan for the deformation of news are not always revealed by investigation, since persons may be hiding in the very ranks of the news service, or even among the group in power – persons who are, in reality, working for the opposite camp and supply the pattern with falsehoods of still another quality. Therefore, if one news service mentions the passenger on the platform, the other may omit him. Pattern A claims him as a star witness for the excellence of the system in whose name it operates. Pattern B ignores the traveller. Or else, it turns him into a witness for the dreadful conditions on the side to which he has gone, with which he has not yet become at all familiar, which he has chosen only because he didn't want to stay where he was. The proximity of these two political systems is nothing more than a choice of realities. It is not logic that links them, but a border.

After the author of this type of text has gathered all possible information about such a traveller he can start out by classifying it according to the two main slants. Then it is up to him to overlook the incident or to concentrate on it. It's not an easy choice. There are many degrees of indifference or of interest; still, no matter what their appearance, factually they side with the power bloc from which the information comes. It is too early to worry about the truth of the incident, what matters at this point is how it is going to be used. The text should be set up in such a way that patterns B or A can neither rearrange nor utilize its implications. After a while the whole job may turn out to have been an utter waste of time because, at an irretrievable moment, it referred to a fleeting context of tendencies

and relations that have changed and that now reverse the intentions of the text. Simple caution recommends that one avoid extending one's diagnoses to prognoses beyond the conclusion of the reported incident. Moreover, why should still another information service-pattern be brought into existence between or beside the other two?

At the outset, it is the author's own business. For instance, he is determined to consider three million emigrants from the East German territory a symptomatic figure and to report an incident on that basis. Possibly he is motivated by the totally irrelevant fact that he, himself, has come from there: his personal experience, which he wants to retrieve from the transitory, to which his text is to give duration. So far, it is still his own business. He defends himself. He denies that he has selfish reasons. He simply starts writing. He then becomes the mouthpiece of a group of people who did not give him the assignment. Or he is taken for their mouthpiece. He turns to another group which he must first convince of the importance of his subject; but to do this he must use only literary arguments so that the details of the story he is planning to write become filled with intentions which may be alien to this medium. And this news pattern C or Y can hardly offer a reliable improvement over the rejected patterns, since the author did, after all, assemble it on the basis of his own knowledge and intentions. Which are perhaps not as representative as he might like to believe. The method is questionable. He visits a certain number of stations in the city and combines their similarities. However, can the average be representative when the extraordinary – which may, after all, contain much more reality – has been overlooked? The author can endow a character he is describing only with attitudes he knows either in himself or from observation. There may of course be others. He questions all the witnesses he can find. And what if they lie to him? Or he may not have found the right ones. He considers the incident in itself an appropriate example. He thinks it proves something about the living conditions on either side of the border. He may simply have been deceived by a statistic. There need not be so many people among those three million who would back up his view. Does one third contradict two thirds? He may also be entangled in experiences that

are his alone. What if his interpretations are prejudices? What if he is guided by opinions it never occurred to him to check and which no one happened to contradict? These are his premises. His system may be subject to specifically literary errors: he may consider general something that is unique. He may call typical something that is personal. He may want to see a principle in sheer statistical accumulation. He is in constant danger of presenting the merely factual as reality.

The word dilemma does not often make its appearance in such a purely congruous relation to its object. The two-sided problem of finding the truth affects the conceptual stage (in itself puzzling). It determines the selection of details that are supposed to constitute the text as they constitute reality. The second German war is an example, because of the border it left behind. There are still enough ruins around stations in the city, they create the environment, they belong to the impression of the arriving traveller. The text mentions conscientiously: a ruin. But does that contain the war? The world and maybe also a little over half of the German population accept as a proven fact that the war was Germany's fault and that her leaders were elected freely at a time when they had already declared all their goals. It is a peculiar reversal of circumstances that the capital of so scorned a people can again furnish a worthy subject. The disgrace is almost forgotten since the function of the place where it occurred has been changed. This reversal must not be allowed to masquerade as absolution. The ruin must answer the following questions: Does the individual citizen, between the manipulated power and his manipulated decision in its favour, end up with the collective guilt? Did the children of that period inherit the guilt of their fathers? Or do they have the collective excuse that a government apparatus is constructed to yield to the respective personal pressures of appointed officials, and does it yield? There are detailed and conflicting theories about the impact of personality upon history, practically every week new facts are revealed about the war that change certain aspects of its interpretation; if history still hesitates to decide on these problems, a literary text cannot very well come up with a ruin and pretend that this surface is precise and meaningful. At the border, the consequences

of this vaguely known incident are not the same as they would be in diplomatic negotiations. A new present has grown over the decisions that were visited on this city in Yalta and in Teheran before the war had even come to an end, so that the temporary arrangement seems antiquated. It seems neither a clear nor a reasonable decision that, in the middle of the territory under Western army influence, the city stations should be under East German control; ownership introduces a humorous element: East German policemen are entitled to check a traveller who, a few yards before or farther on, can hold them responsible with gestures and grimaces for circumstances for which most of them are too young to be responsible. (He may not yet dare express himself out loud.) This is an important risk for the traveller, as important as his background for the understanding of his situation, it must be part of the description: suddenly however ruin and policeman seem phenomena without points of comparison or common cause, their proximity is misleading. An instant frozen within a constantly shifting environment, each requires another view.

The dilemma can also affect the descriptive stage. The exterior of the station seems an appropriate illustration of the arriving traveller's choice. At any rate, this is the place he has come to. The architecture looks just as it did on the other side of the border: cast-iron pillars support a downward curving or dipping roof above the platform which is usually paved with small light-coloured stones. Benches and rest-rooms have been set up at intervals along the platform, there are booths for the railway employees, stands that sell food and newspapers. Fortunately there are differences. Whatever belongs to East Germany in the station looks shabby. The dirt on the windows of the underground passages looks as though it had been etched into the glass, in waiting-rooms and service-booths the paint is peeling off the walls, the beams are rotting in the roofs, the iron flowers on the pillars are rusty, and where a bullet may have hit the nameplate of the station fifteen years ago, the irregular star of the shot is still staring out of the enamel. But the station's surroundings look opulent, as does anything inside that has been leased to West Berlin. On the plaster-coated brick walls the traveller notices advertisements for products he doesn't know, in colours that aim to please; riding above

ground he has seen house-fronts of glass and marble and heavy traffic; below the station an unusual number of cars park quietly along the sidewalk; the stands on the platform offer a wide variety of edibles, cigarettes, newspapers that will taste, smoke, read differently. Perhaps better. Is this an authentic difference? If brought up, it stresses the passenger's decision to stay. Does he mean it that way? Would he rather live in a country that leaves its economy up to free competition and is, at present, enjoying a boom, and does he object to a government-controlled and -administered economy because, where he comes from, it has not met with good luck? Those aren't reasons for a trip. Desire for a more luxurious life is not general as a motivation and not worth mentioning. Life here strikes him as prosperous. But do the economic accomplishments of a government prove its fairness? Research has not determined whether free enterprise will be able to go on supplying its citizens so lavishly with consumer goods; there are business-cycle theories about which the most experienced experts lecture most un-unanimously. Also, the owners of the East German State may possibly learn how to plan and direct an economy; this theory too has its experts who are no longer on speaking terms because they were obliged to contradict each other too vehemently. To wait and see is out of the question: the newly arrived has just made his decision. The way in which a government is organized does, of course, influence its economy; however, the relationship is not direct. The changes in conditions do not seem interconnected. Free enterprise may grow poor some day, eventually fewer failures have been predicted for government-controlled economies. If one wishes to show the traveller's reasons, which actually refer to the degree of democracy in a community, the looks of an interurban station are not appropriate: they distract from his reasons. What he does meet here, though, is the exterior which will be the constant environment of his changed existence. It is unthinkable to disregard the spots of colour when describing a grey station. And possibly (in view of the still undetermined factual as well as scientific possibilities) it may be unfair to the accomplishments of free enterprise if the perplexed traveller sees them merely as different, a difference he neither wants nor understands.

Even his speech encounters obstacles. There is no uniform language to express the mixture of independent phenomena that converge at such a border station. The two power systems that govern life along the border have changed the behaviour of their citizens when they changed their living conditions. Each has taught its members different reactions. Attitudes towards official requirements, relations such as the job contract, a friendship, riding side by side in a train have different interpretations and seem therefore like different behaviour. Each has its point of reference. The newcomer arrives equipped with habits and considerations for which he suddenly lacks the reasons that prompted them on the other side. He notices that the people next to him pay no attention to things which frighten him. He watches them have arguments he'd consider either too trifling or too risky in public. Where they let go, he has scruples. Real foreign countries are rarely so foreign. If the description follows the contours of his perceptions for a while, it has to accept a totally individual method that is not suitable for describing people of the other nationality. The existence of words such as 'reserved' or 'relaxed' encourages the illusion that they may be applied to all occurring gestures and facial expressions. Individual character actually plays a disproportionately smaller part in a person's behaviour than the motivations that prompt it. The motivations cannot be compared. The interplay of associations has different implications: the policeman, the advertisement, the brownish dust on the platform are, for instance, a more dangerous combination for the newcomer than for the other passengers. Their motivations are not present. The description of the platform may be extended to take in the distant objects and circumstances that are still prompting this passenger's shadowlike reactions. Perhaps the differences will become apparent but the writing becomes bloated; and it does not eliminate other shortcomings. Because, furthermore, each power system has established its own terminology which it was able to impose to some extent as a convention within its territory. For instance, each of the two Berlins calls itself free and the other not free, itself democratic and the other undemocratic, itself peace-loving and the other rocket-rattling, etc. Some of these diffuse formulas have actually seeped into everyday speech and are often used without irony. So the traveller

arrives with a baggage of definitions for objects, credos, political circumstances that don't exist where he has alighted, where these definitions are not familiar. Moreover, these definitions judge and take sides, so they would be unfit for the text in any case. Also, they must be considered in relation to the traveller's possible detachment from them; the fact that he uses them doesn't mean that he approves of them. He may not have found satisfactory substitute definitions, and felt obliged to use the official ones, like a currency whose exchange rate must tacitly be adjusted to its purchasing power before one can approximate its real value. Anyhow, with tools such as these he'll hardly be able to offer the inhabitants of the other country a clear understanding of his position. This applies not only to his place of departure but also to his destination. Up to now, he was at the mercy of the news service of the country he has just left which not only made one-sided reports, but also blocked news from the other country in order to be able to impose its own unhampered interpretation. Only occasionally and always accidentally have comparisons been possible. The general distrust of newspaper reports, broadcasts, and government sources is purely defensive; its results are vague. The traveller could not always avoid blind acceptance of definitions and judgements of the conditions on the other side of the border, he has brought them along; from the train he already notices the predicted items, misunderstands them at first on the basis of those definitions against which he has been defenceless. He'll have a hard time adjusting his definitions to the respective objects. He'll have a hard time learning the definitions of the foreign country, comparing them to those he brought along, finally arriving at his own definitions on the basis of his personal experiences. A text that wants to tackle this aspect of the incident needs a language that encompasses the respective truths of both territories and can also be understood beyond the regional context. This requires a criterion that undermines itself with its novelty and insufficient extent. In the end, the result may be no more than a separate solution. (Some of these remarks are, of course, justified only because these two cities once formed the capital of a not-divided country, and in view of a possible or desirable reunification.)

Various literary consequences have come out of these conditions surrounding the subject (which is essentially the subject of post-war Germany). In the case I am discussing, they affected mainly the narrator's position. Where does the author stand in his text? Attitudes of omniscience are suspicious. The godlike panorama of a Balzac is admirable. Balzac lived from 1799 to 1850. How can the author who first has to invent and assemble his text squat on a stool high above the field like a referee during a tennis match, how can he know all the rules, all the players, and unerringly observe them besides, intervene supremely at any time he chooses and even change places with his characters and look into their hearts as he rarely manages to look into his own? The author ought to admit that he invented what he tells, that his information is incomplete and imprecise. After all, he wants money for his product. He can, for instance, make this admission by stressing the difficult quest for truth, by comparing or relating his own view of what has happened to that of one of his characters, by omitting what he cannot know, by not giving out as pure art what is yet another quest for truth. This may of course lead to gestures which may not be epic, but if, for instance, an ideology ties in effectively with the events in the text, a discussion about this ideology seems another possible way of telling about the event, and not the most impractical. An author is expected to report on the situation, should he do so with methods the situation has outgrown? In the standing feud about the treatment of time: conventional versus more recent methods, he can only choose whichever is the more precise, because precision is part of his job. Of course the principle by which he keeps trying to adapt his style to incessantly changing reality is limited to himself. He does, of course, compromise and of course he worries occasionally, because this interests far fewer readers than he would like. Still, I hope my description of the difficulties did give you an approximate idea of a Berlin Inter-urban Station.

Translated by Ursule Molinaro

Hans Magnus Enzensberger

LACHESIS LAPPONICA

here it is bright, by the rusty water, nowhere. here,
these are the grey willows, this is the grey grass,
this is the dusky bright sky, here i stand.

(that is no standpoint, says the bird in my head.)

here where i stand, that whiteness in the wind is the moor sedge,
look how it flickers. the silent empty wilderness here is the earth . . .

(! viva! cries the dusky bird: ! viva fidel castro !)

what's castro got to do with it ! *(what have you got to do with it,
with the cotton grass, the hair grass by the dusky water?)*

nothing, i've nothing, bird, do you hear? and no bird,
bird, whistles for me. *(that is true.)* leave me in peace.
here i'm not fighting. *(it's a curlew, most likely.)*

over there is north, where it's getting dark, you see,
the moor gets dark very slowly. here i have nothing,
here i have nothing to do. the whiteness up in the north
is the spirits of the north, the moor's bright spirits.

*(that is no standpoint, those are no spirits,
those are birch trees, it shrieks, here nothing happens.)*

that's good. i'm not fighting. leave me. i'm waiting.

in time, very slowly, the bark peels off,
(it's nothing to me) and the whiteness there,
 the whiteness there under the whiteness, you see,
 that i shall read. *(and here, it says, the exact time:
 twenty-three fifty.)* here in the rusty moss.

i believe in spirits *(there's no such thing !)* empty silent wild.
 i too am a spirit. and so is that shrieking bird
 in my silent head. *(don't say that.)*

we both look northward. midnight. *(on times square
 you stand, dead man, i know you, i see you buy,
 sell and be sold, it is you, on red square,
 on the kurfürstendamm, and you look at your rusty watch.)*

*(it's a curlew, most likely, or else a peewit.
 don't say that, get it out of your head.)*

i'll cut off your head, bird. *(it's your own.
 ! viva fidel ! better dead than red ! have a break ! ban the bomb !
 über alles in der welt !)* don't say that. *(you are all that,
 says the bird, imagine, you have been that, you are that.)*

how do you mean? *(in all seriousness, says the bird and laughs.)*
 a curlew can't laugh. *(it's yourself, it says,
 who are laughing. you'll regret it. i know who you are,
 death's head on the kurfürstendamm.)* on the moor.

white, dusky, grey. there are no victories here.
 that is the moor sedge, those are the grey willows,
 that is the bright bird against the dusky sky.

now it is midnight, now the bark splits,
(the exact time :) it is white, *(zero two minutes)*
 there in the mist, where it's getting dark, you can read it,
 the blank page. the silent empty wilderness.
 here nothing happens. *(don't say that.)* here i am.
 leave me. *(don't say that.)* leave me alone.

*(do you agree with me, death's head, and are you dead?
is it a peewit? if you are not dead
what are you waiting for?) i'm waiting. i'm waiting.*

it is on the outermost edge of this plain, marsh grass,
cotton grass, hair grass, where it is dusky already, bird,
(how do you mean?) do you see? do you see the white script?

*(coward, it says, good luck. we shall meet again.)
leave me where all is blank. (death's head.)
look how it flickers. (and the dusky bird
in my head says to itself: he's asleep, that means
he agrees.)*

but i am not asleep.

KARL HEINRICH MARX

gigantic grandfather
jehovah-bearded
on brown daguerrotypes
i see your face
in the snow-white aura
despotic quarrelsome
and your papers in the linen press:
butcher's bills
inaugural addresses
warrants for your arrest

your massive body
i see in the 'wanted' book
gigantic traitor
displaced person
in tail coat and plastron
consumptive sleepless
your gall-bladder scorched

by heavy cigars
salted gherkins laudanum
and liqueur

i see your house
in the rue d'alliance
dean street grafton terrace
gigantic bourgeois
domestic tyrant
in worn-out slippers:
soot and 'economic shit'
usury 'as usual'
children's coffins
rumours of sordid affairs

no machine-gun
in your prophet's hand:
i see it calmly
in the british museum
under the green lamp
break up your own house
with a terrible patience
gigantic founder
for the sake of other houses
in which you never woke up

gigantic zaddik
i see you betrayed
by your disciples:
only your enemies
remained what they were:
i see your face
on the last picture
of april eighty-two:
an iron mask:
the iron mask of freedom

MIDDLE CLASS BLUES

we can't complain.
we're not out of work.
we don't go hungry.
we eat.

the grass grows,
the national product
the fingernail,
the past.

the streets are empty.
the deals have been clinched.
the sirens are silent.
all that will pass.

the dead have made their wills.
the rain's become a drizzle.
the war's not yet been declared.
there's no hurry for that.

we eat the grass.
we eat the national product.
we eat the fingernails.
we eat the past.

we have nothing to conceal.
we have nothing to miss.
we have nothing to say.
we have.

the watch has been wound up.
the bills have been paid.
the washing up has been done.
the last bus is passing by.

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it is empty.

we can't complain.

what are we waiting for?

Translated by Michael Hamburger

Klaus Roehler

THE DIGNITY OF NIGHT

(I)

Down in the hall they were discussing American tooth-brushes and the difference between 'culture' and 'civilization'. The hall lay at ground level, between the east and west wings of the hostel. Each wing had four storeys. The girls lived in the east wing, the young men in the west wing. To one side of the hall lay the main entrance, the porter's lodge and lockers for the students. Above ran a gallery connecting the first floor of the west wing and the first floor of the east wing: the so-called 'bridge of friendship'. On the other side of the hall there were large plate-glass doors leading into the garden. It was a spacious, functional, modern hall with contemporary wicker chairs and round tables, and people liked to sit and chat in the sun shining through the plate-glass doors. American tooth-brushes have a smaller rubbing surface. Cologne Cathedral is 'culture'; refrigerators and central heating are 'civilization'. Civilization is the child of technics. 'O yeah,' said Nicholas, 'I know Cologne Cathedral, it must be very old.'

Then they began to sit next to each other at lectures, to go to the cinema and for long walks together. 'Many American films are bad,' Nicholas had said, and Susy had decided he must have good taste. Thank goodness he's not as unsophisticated as some Americans. She took great trouble to try and understand him: an expedition into an unknown world. She read novels by Negroes and about Negroes, and Negro poetry:

Under my hand the pyramids arose
I made mortar for the Woolworth building . . .

and:

I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than
The flow of human blood in human veins.

Sometimes such poetry made her want to cry. Nicholas had never read any of it before. He gave the books back to her with an embarrassed smile.

Susy is nineteen years old. Ever since she left school she has written her name with a 'y'; 'Susie' looks so homely. I have a coloured boy-friend.

(2)

Nicholas came from Denver, Colorado. He was on a scholarship from Colorado University and had already studied two terms in Germany. He didn't drink; he didn't smoke. He liked Germany; but he was always homesick for America. His father, who had been born in the South, owned a small hotel in Denver. He had come back from the First World War suffering from gas poisoning. His girl was living in the South at that time. He saved up his army pay and gratuity and worked in the North until he had enough to buy the hotel. Then he went South and fetched his girl. She'd had to wait six years for him.

'Don't you ever feel oppressed at home?' Susy asked. 'Don't you ever feel a hatred of white men?'

'No,' Nicholas replied, 'America is the land of liberty. Many of our laws still exist only on paper, but we have faith in them. The law will give us our due eventually.'

'Does everybody think like you?'

'Most people think like me,' Nicholas replied. 'We don't need to start a revolution. How do you say in German? "That's beneath my dignity."'

Nicholas was tall and had the figure of a Negro Olympic champion. His curly hair was cut very short. Susy liked long hair, but she agreed that Negroes had to have short hair. She had been told once that most Negroes smelt. But Nicholas didn't smell. He had cool, smooth, almost fish-like hands and skin like velvet. When they walked down the street together people would turn and look at them, and Susy concluded, watching Nicholas's and her reflections in shop windows, that they must be a handsome pair. A pity I'm not blonde! There were moments when she was truly sorry for girls

who hadn't got a Nicholas, when she felt the same pride of possession a mink-draped lady feels in the exotic animal at the end of her lead. And at the same time she felt she was a pioneer of humanitarian ideals.

(3)

East Wing: First Floor: Room 116. On the nameplate: Inge Boettscher, medical student; Ursula Ristan, theological student.

'I would be more careful,' Fräulein Ristan said. 'They're beginning to talk about you in the hostel.'

'I'd vary the colour, first of all,' Fräulein Boettscher added. 'It's the colour that causes offence.'

'There's so much rubbish talked here,' Susy retorted. 'I don't care. And the sort of people who would talk about us aren't worth knowing anyway.'

'People aren't talking about you-and-Nicholas, they're talking about *you*,' said Fräulein Ristan.

'A white girl,' Fräulein Boettscher added. 'We're not in Brazil or North America.'

'There's a much greater difference between me and the average German worker than between me and Nicholas,' replied Susy. 'It's education that counts.'

'Sounds all right in theory,' said Fräulein Boettscher.

'There are dumb niggers, too,' said Fräulein Ristan.

'And white girls who sleep with niggers for money,' Fräulein Boettscher added.

'I wouldn't be seen with Nicholas too often in public,' Fräulein Ristan said. 'I wouldn't go to his room too often, particularly not in the evening.'

'Equality can go too far,' said Fräulein Boettscher.

'We're only good friends after all,' replied Susy. 'Or what do you think?'

(4)

West Wing: Second Floor: Room 202. On the nameplate: Heinrich Baxmann, art student.

Baxmann was lying on his bed, smoking. His typewriter stood on the table. Baxmann had been working for weeks on his thesis 'The Twin Concepts of Dignity and Beauty in German Classical Literature'. He was exhausted, but it was still too early to go to bed.

She ought to be ashamed of herself, he reflected. People don't seem to realize there are certain limits which are not to be transgressed. They've lost all feeling for natural dignity. They've no standards any more. Signs of decadence. Not so long ago they'd have cut off her hair. What's so attractive about the nigger anyway? Negroes' sexual potency is supposed to be greater. She's a woman after all. Men used to be allowed to beat their wives. Women are like animals; they have to be tamed with the whip. Fornication with the spirits of the jungle. Perhaps it's their music. Jazz sweeps away inhibitions. Jazz from the jungle. Symptoms of the West's decline.

Baxmann sat upright and threw his cigarette out of the window. His bed stood under the window. From this position he could see into the third and fourth floors of the east wing. The nigger was sitting on the window-sill of Susy's room.

'I'll have to teach her a lesson.'

(5)

West Wing: Third Floor: Room 321. On the nameplate: Wolfgang Kappel, Egon Menne.

'What's she get out of it, I wonder?' Menne questioned. 'What's so attractive about the nigger? What's he got that we haven't got? Susy's a pretty girl.'

'You're barking up the wrong tree,' Kappel replied. 'I knew Susy at school. She has crazy fads like most young girls. One shouldn't take them too seriously. Just now it's the nigger. She'll see reason and it'll turn out all right in the end. The affair is quite harmless and doesn't bear talking about.'

'Harmless!' Menne repeated, 'harmless! Am I blind? I see them both sitting in the hall, I see them going for walks together, I see Susy on the way to Nicholas's room, and the Negro on the way to Susy's room. I see him sitting on her window-sill.'

'Got anything against Negroes?'

'No. Nicholas's a good baseball player. But there are limits.'

'What's it got to do with you?'

'I'm concerned to find out the truth. What attracts a white girl to a nigger?'

'I'm quite sure,' Kappel said, 'that Susy and Nicholas are not the right subject for your studies.'

'How does a black hand look between white breasts?'

'Susy's a child.'

'Does black skin between thighs give greater satisfaction?'

'You're a swine, Menne,' Kappel said, 'a filthy great swine!'

'Fi,' Menne replied, 'these moral valuations! Who riseth above the earth shall lose the ground under his feet. Who goeth on the earth shall wade through a morass.'

(6)

It had been raining during the night and the path they had taken through the wood grew ever swampier. The pot-holes had become large puddles reflecting the sunlight. A breeze stirred from time to time in the wood, rustling among the fir-trees, wafting a scent of wet moss and broken mushrooms in their direction and scattering sparkling raindrops from the twigs of the firs into the glassy air. They walked on side by side, and when a particularly large puddle had to be crossed, Nicholas would jump first and wait, watching Susy's movements attentively, until she was standing next to him again. Not once did he offer assistance or give her his hand. Their hands touched only when they shook hands in the morning and when they said good-bye. That was all. And Susy wasn't sure whether she really wished for any further signs of intimacy.

'Susy,' Nicholas said. 'Do you mind if we are seen together?'

'What makes you say that, Nicholas?' Susy protested.

'I only thought . . . it might make things difficult for you. I wouldn't like you to feel embarrassed.'

'You don't make things difficult,' Susy said. 'There are always people who've nothing better to do than to talk about other people's business.'

'I knew it,' said Nicholas. 'They are talking about you.'

'Don't worry,' Susy replied. 'I don't take any notice.'

She watched him intently as he walked by her side, as he gazed into the wood, gazed with his great eyes – sad eyes like the eyes of a mule or some other ancient beast of burden. His face was really like that of an aged baboon in the Zoo:

I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than
The flow of human blood in human veins.

Ape and ass: these were unlovely comparisons, but there was nothing she could think of so old and so sad and at the same time so full of life to compare with her dark-skinned ancient companion.

(7)

West Wing: Second Floor: Room 207. On the nameplate: Peter Weyde, student of law.

Weyde had drawn the curtains and left the window behind them ajar. When the wind billowed the curtain out a tongue of daylight, wide as the window, leapt across the table by the window to the bed. The chairs by the bed were draped with pieces of clothing. Weyde was engaged; and his fiancée visited him every Sunday.

'Listen,' she said. 'Someone's talking in the next room.'

'So what?' said Weyde. 'There's no law against it.'

'They're speaking English.'

'The room next door's occupied by an American, a Negro,' said Weyde.

'That's a girl talking now,' said Weyde's fiancée. 'Are there black girls in the hostel too?'

'No.'

'Aha, a white girl!' said Weyde's fiancée sitting up. 'Are they allowed to visit Negroes?'

'Why not? Aren't you visiting me?'

'But we're engaged.'

'Yes, indeed,' said Weyde. 'Now lie down, the couple next door are not our affair.'

Weyde's fiancée got up, tiptoed to the wall and put her ear to it.

'I can understand every word,' she whispered. 'It's English. The Negro has a marvellous voice.'

'The walls are as thin as the soup in the canteen,' said Weyde. 'Come back to bed. You've nothing on. You'll catch cold.'

'What's he look like?' whispered Weyde's fiancée. 'Is he tall? Curly hair? Thick lips?'

'Yeah.'

'Is he good looking?'

'Maybe. I've never looked that closely.'

'Boy,' whispered Weyde's fiancée. 'A real Negro? And alone with a white girl in his room. Can you imagine it?'

'What the hell! Come to bed,' said Weyde impatiently.

'Perhaps they're about to go to bed.'

'Who told you they sleep together?'

'It's obvious. What else would they be doing in a room that can be locked from the inside? Or what do you think?'

'I don't think anything, because I couldn't care less,' Weyde replied. 'I'll draw the curtains if you don't come now.'

She came back to bed. The contours of her moist toes were visible on the smooth shiny surface of the floor. 'I love you,' she whispered, when she lay under the blanket again, 'I love you. Is it the same with Negroes?'

'You have the imagination of a kitchen maid,' Weyde replied.

'O.K. But hold me tight, hold me as tight as you can.'

(8)

Beds, tables, and chairs were strewn with fashion magazines and spread-out patterns. 'Too dear,' Fräulein Boettscher said and put down the magazine she had been looking at. 'The making of it costs more than the material. But how do you like this one, Susy?'

'Nice,' Susy answered, 'perhaps a little risqué.'

'Why shouldn't I wear something smart for a change?' Fräulein Ristan said. 'Let's have a look! What material though? Corduroy, jersey?'

'For heaven's sake!' Susy exclaimed.

'The fashionable colours are light blue and pale green.' Fräulein Ristan said. 'And perhaps grey.'

'And black,' Fräulein Boettscher said.

'Why black?' asked Susy.

'Inge!' warned Fräulein Ristan.

'Oh,' said Susy, and put the magazine she had been reading back on the table. 'That reminds me, I wanted to drop in on Nicholas. You'll be able to manage without me no doubt.'

'Don't be so touchy,' said Fräulein Ristan.

'I'm not touchy,' Susy replied. 'But allusions of that kind are not to my taste.'

(9)

Baxmann stood behind the door of his room and waited. Every time he heard someone walking down the corridor he opened the door to see who it was. Then he walked slowly to the bathroom at the end of the corridor, looked into the mirror above the basin, wiped his hands on the towel, and went back to his room to wait behind the door again. I'll teach her a lesson a lesson excuse me Miss Er-Er will you come into my room for a moment a lesson I'll teach her a lesson. . . . The corridor was long and narrow, circular opaque glass lamps hung from the ceiling that stayed on for three minutes at a time when you turned the switch. It was very quiet in the corridor; the sounds and movements in the rooms to either side merged imperceptibly into the monotonous nocturnal buzz of the gigantic building.

Baxmann was just leaving the bathroom again when Susy entered his field of vision. I'll teach her excuse me a lesson a lesson. Susy was coming from Nicholas. Baxmann went up to her and halted abruptly. The lamps under the ceiling went out, but Baxmann had left his door ajar and a narrow chink of light fell across the dark corridor.

'I would like to have a word with you,' Baxmann said into the darkness. 'Excuse me Miss Er-Er, would you come into my room for a moment?'

'Won't you put the light on?' Susy replied. 'Thank you. Well, what is it?'

'It won't take long,' said Baxmann. Susy hesitated before she entered, then Baxmann shut the door behind her. 'There,' he said, pointing to the table.

'Well?' Susy repeated.

'It's for you,' Baxmann said.

'For me?'

'Yes.'

'What shall I do with the money?'

'Not enough?' Baxmann asked.

'What on earth do you mean?' Susy replied. 'Please let me go.'

'Get undressed,' Baxmann said. 'I'll increase the sum if you like. Shall I blacken my face before we begin? Or doesn't skin-colour matter so much in the dark?'

(10)

'You know me well enough,' Susy said. 'You know how harmless the whole affair is. No one can say anything against me with a clear conscience.'

'I'm quite sure,' Fräulein Ristan said, 'that Baxmann's conscience is clear.'

'What have I done,' Susy asked, 'that somebody can offer me money with impunity. Do I look like a . . . ?'

'No,' Kappel replied, 'but you have let things get out of hand. You should have been more circumspect. Most people's imagination is pretty murky.'

'Please go to Baxmann and beat him up,' Susy said. 'You're a man, you can do it. Hit him till he realizes what a swine he's been.'

'Susy,' Fräulein Ristan said. 'Be reasonable.'

'I keep wondering if I have done anything wrong,' Susy said. 'But I know perfectly well I haven't. I have a coloured boy-friend. Is there some law against having a coloured boy-friend? What century are we living in? Is black skin a sign of inferiority?'

'No,' Kappel replied. 'But it's not so simple as that. That's your mistake, you see everything too simply.'

'We are not superior to Nicholas,' Fräulein Ristan explained, 'but we are different.'

'Colour is no problem,' Kappel said, 'it's the different world that lies behind it.'

'But that's just what I want: that people shouldn't distrust Nicholas simply because he comes from a different world.'

'You must admit,' Kappel said, 'you've got yourself into a more than ambiguous situation.'

'Are the people who talk about tolerance and humanity all liars? Is it what you see that matters or what you think? Or neither?'

'Such copybook maxims are well-meant,' Kappel replied. 'But they don't work out in practice; in practice you soon get into difficulties.'

'It's simply too early,' Fräulein Ristan said. 'Most people aren't prepared for your taking them at their word like that.'

'You intrude upon the most private regions of the human soul.'

'It is better not to cause offence. It works out to one's disadvantage.'

'I've nothing against Nicholas, of course, but if I were you I'd pursue a policy of disengagement.'

'Why make difficulties that can easily be avoided?'

'It's better to give way, you lose nothing by it.'

'You have taken on something beyond your strength. No one would think the worse of you.'

(II)

'Nicholas,' Susy said, 'I'd like to ask you something.'

'Yes?'

'I . . . please, don't get me wrong, nothing's changed between us. But there's so much silly talk. And should one give people food for gossip?'

'No,' Nicholas replied.

'Nothing at all has changed between us. Please don't think I'd let myself be influenced by anyone. It's just that a woman has got to be terribly careful. What is permissible for a man may be a serious *faux pas* for a woman.'

'A *faux pas*?'

'I mean a woman is more exposed to such silly gossip. Perhaps it

would be better if we didn't meet in each other's rooms. Particularly in the evening. You know what I mean, don't you? Nothing has changed between us. But you understand it puts a girl into an ambiguous position if she's seen visiting a man in his room, especially in the evenings.'

'Yes,' said Nicholas. 'Let's not talk about it any more. I understand very well.'

(12)

I have taught her a lesson a lesson I have branded her soul with a mark of shame I have torn the veil of lust from her eyes I have opened her eyes she has looked into the abyss of her heart I Heinrich Baxmann have rescued her with my strong arm I noble knight helmet on head sword in saving hand stand terrible raging here in storm of battle armour mirroring cool a world in flames excuse me Miss Er-Er may I have the honour to sleep with you a lesson a lesson . . .

(13)

'Nicholas is coming,' Fräulein Ristan said, shutting the door. 'I spoke to him in the hall. Shall I turn the key?'

'No,' replied Susy. 'Why shouldn't I be in if Nicholas knocks?'

'Susy,' said Fräulein Ristan, 'don't let's start all over again. You'd better be out when he knocks.'

'Does it matter if I'm in?'

'That's him,' Fräulein Ristan said. 'He's coming along the corridor.' She turned the key in the lock.

'Open the door,' Susy said. 'Open the door at once. I won't have you locking the door in his face.'

'Shh,' whispered Fräulein Ristan. 'He's there.' Nicholas knocked at the door. Susy, who was sitting at her table by the window, got up and went to the door. Fräulein Ristan raised a finger to her mouth. 'Open the door,' Susy whispered. Fräulein Ristan rested her back gingerly against the door. Nicholas knocked again: a short, sharp rap. It was clearly audible down the corridor.

A breaker of silence had flooded into the room at Nicholas's first knock. By now the silence had spread out evenly, drowning and swallowing everything: table, chairs, bed, cupboard. The silence had gradually forced the walls apart until the distances between them had grown enormous. The door had swollen to a gigantic size and the ceiling receded to an immense height; it was almost invisible, or was it perhaps no longer a ceiling at all but open to infinite space, from which a thunderbolt might hurtle down at any moment? And there was Susy beneath it all, tiny, her hand resting where the chair had been not long before; and at the door Fräulein Ristan, no less tiny, finger to mouth, stretching out her arm, an absurdly petrified insect, to keep Susy from the door. The watch on Susy's wrist raced on breathlessly, importunately; and at Nicholas's third knock door and walls seemed to shudder like steel plate struck by a drop-hammer.

'He's going now,' Fräulein Ristan whispered, and Nicholas's steps could be heard receding from the door and thudding away down the corridor. Slowly the sounds of the house dripped back into the room.

A radio wheedling.

Two voices chatting outside a door.

The ping of a typewriter bell.

A sudden brittle laugh from a deck-chair in the garden.

The whistling of a kettle boiling in the kitchen.

'I'm deeply ashamed of myself,' Susy said. 'You'll never be able to understand how I feel at this moment.'

(14)

'Love, if it is to flourish,' said Menne, 'requires a propitious climate. Good soil is not enough. Beyond a certain point the benevolence of the environment is decisive.'

'Romeo and Juliet!' Kappel protested. 'Your words are redolent of the retort and the slide-rule.'

'There you are,' triumphed Menne, 'Romeo and Juliet! That's not an objection, it confirms my thesis. Love's permutations are calculable, like a mathematical equation, like the weight the steel girders of a bridge can carry.'

'Spare me your oversimplifications,' Kappel said.

'What do you want?' Menne replied. 'The bit about the bridge is rather poetic, though I hadn't intended it to be so. But let's stick to Juliet. Why is she famous? Because she died young, died the death of a pretty, hysterical teenager. The heroines of such tragic love stories tend to be between fifteen and twenty-five years old. Absolute love is a function of puberty. What would have happened to Romeo and Juliet if the plague had not made its appearance? Juliet would have grown old and fat, and, borne down by her family's curse, would have ended up peeling potatoes and scrubbing floors. There would have been children too, and as for Romeo: what trade had he ever learned? What would they live on? No longer the famous couple of lovers from Verona but just two young people who've run away from home, the ecstasy of whose love has long evaporated. Alone, in a strange country, without money, miserable, shabby, helpless. Where, I ask you, would be the transcendental glory of their love?'

'The language of the heart and the language of the blood,' Keppel replied. 'Don't use words that have no meaning for you.'

'Rubbish,' said Menne contemptuously. 'The language of the heart! Has Susy acquired a speech impediment all of a sudden? Has she been struck dumb? No, she is simply giving way to the pressure of an environment that is unfriendly to her love. She chose discretion, before being given an opportunity to prove strength of character. Who comes out of it worst? Not Susy and not Nicholas: but love, Kappel, love. Love has no shape; it's like a piece of gum a man spits out when he's tired of chewing it.'

'You forget,' Kappel said, 'that there can be no question of love where Susy and Nicholas are concerned.'

'How d'you know that?' Menne asked. 'Have you got it in writing? All the same, I admit, the case is a particularly tricky one.'

'It is not the right object for your studies,' Kappel said. 'It's too complex for you.'

'The hell it is,' said Menne. 'But I regret all the same there wasn't time for a more exhaustive analysis.'

(15)

'Hallo, Susy,' said Nicholas. 'How's things?'

'Thanks. I've had a lot of work to do.'

'We haven't seen one another for a long time,' Nicholas said.

'I'm sorry, but it's almost the end of term and I've had several papers to hand in. I'm terribly sorry, Nicholas, we've seen so little of one another.'

'I was going to drop in on you afterwards,' said Nicholas. 'Just for a second.'

'You thought of dropping in on me?'

'Yes. D'you remember me telling you about the University of Colorado?'

'Oh yes.'

'The English Club's showing a film about it this evening. Would you like to come along? It seemed to interest you then.'

'This evening?'

'Yes.'

'I don't know,' said Susy. 'I've got a lot to do.'

'I would be very pleased if you could come.'

'How long will it be?'

'About an hour.'

'I don't know,' said Susy. 'I dare say I could manage it. When does it begin?'

'At eight.'

'O.K.,' said Susy. 'I'll come. But please don't come and fetch me. I'll be in the hall. And perhaps I'll bring Ursula with me. D'you mind if I bring her?'

'No,' said Nicholas. 'I'll wait in the hall.'

(16)

An easy chair. A late bird singing in the loggia of the garden. The buzz of anonymous voices in the hall. Night wind flowed through cloud-red windows, cooling masonry still hot from the sun. Silence broken only by the clatter of a typewriter. Grass, bright sandstone flags and flowers in beds along the wall, bleached by oncoming night.

On the gravel a crunch of light shadowy steps; hall door snapping shut. From the open windows of the hostel beams of light leapt forth and cut yellow squares on the shadow-dappled grass. Gleaming lights, going on and off, flooding the garden with cascades of milky brightness. And the sky over the hostel seemed to sink lower and lower as the darkness increased.

Nicholas waited, leaning back in his wicker chair, until the light in Susy's room went out. Then he got up, carried his chair back into the hall and shut the garden door. Resting his hands on the back of the chair he directed his gaze towards the staircase down which Susy would be coming.

The staircase rose straight from the hall into the first floor. At the entrance to the first floor the staircase then turned to the left and continued spirally up to the fourth floor. Fräulein Boettscher turned the corner first, Menne by her side, Susy and Keppel behind. Fräulein Boettscher stood still on seeing Nicholas and turned to Susy. Susy stopped, then Menne and Kappel. They stood in a group at the entrance to the first door.

'Good heavens,' Susy said, 'Nicholas.'

'Go on,' said Kappel, 'we can't stand about here.'

'How embarrassing,' said Susy, 'I'd quite forgotten he was waiting here.'

'I observe complete neutrality,' Menne said. 'Will Romeo run a sword through his heart?'

'We must go on,' Kappel said. 'We're too conspicuous standing here.'

'I met him this morning,' said Susy. 'I completely forgot he'd be waiting here. What on earth shall I say to him?'

'Nothing,' said Kappel. 'Leave him.'

'But I can't simply walk past him,' Susy said.

'And at that point where he is most vulnerable shall the shaft of the sword be aimed,' Menne said.

'We'll be late if we don't hurry up,' said Fräulein Boettscher.

They went downstairs, slowly and deliberately; Menne and Fräulein Boettscher in front, Kappel and Susy behind. A solemn embarrassed procession, they progressed from the first floor down into the hall and Nicholas, who had been standing behind his chair,

started to move towards them. A few yards from the staircase he stopped. Menne was the first to reach the hall.

'Hello, Nicholas,' he cried nodding cheerfully in his direction.

'Evening,' said Fräulein Boettscher.

'Hello,' said Kappel and made a gesture as of salutation with his left hand.

'Good evening, Nicholas,' said Susy without looking at him.

Menne and Kappel held the door open. They had dark suits on and raincoats over their shoulders. Fräulein Boettscher and Susy followed through the door, light coats thrown over their summer dresses, looking very attractive. Where were they going? Menne followed them out and Kappel shut the hall door from the outside. A wave of black night-air surged into the hall. The radio blared in the porter's lodge.

Nicholas hesitated, standing there with drooping arms and head wedged between shoulders, then he turned round and sat down again in the wicker chair. All the lights were still on in the hall, the ceiling-lights and the lights along the gallery. A cool, clinical luminosity, intolerant of shadows. A polite and pitiless cocoon of radiation. Nicholas shut his eyes. O my dark-skinned ancient companion.

(17)

In a wicker chair unseeing objects and forms. Of stone and blood the sound alone. Soft tripping of feet on the gallery; sharp tapping of delicate fingers. 'Hold me tight,' whispered Weyde's fiancée, 'hold me ever so tight. Has the nigger got company again?' In the porter's lodge the telephone rang. 'No,' said the porter, 'Herr Kappel is out. Can I take a message?'

'I,' thought Baxmann, 'a noble knight stand terrible raging here in storm of battle armour mirroring cool a world in flames.'

'It's the colour above all,' said Fräulein Boettscher, 'the colour that causes offence.'

'Fi,' said Menne, 'moral valuations! Who goeth on earth shall wade through a morass.'

'It is better,' said Fräulein Ristan, 'not to cause offence.'

'It is better to give way,' said Kappel.

'Right,' said the porter, 'I've made a note of it. Right. Thank you. Good-bye.'

From the ground-floor corridor complaint of rough voices. Steps on the stairs. Steps on the stone flags of the hall. The buzz of the automatic door opener. Echoes from the hall; echoes from the corridor. Footsteps, voices, doors, telephones. In the stillness that spread out gradually around Nicholas, as rings spread out in water around a shipwreck, the flotsam of sound from hall and corridor began to bob up and down, sucking the stillness in and submerging in it. Later, when the cinemas in the town closed down, the hall woke up once again. Someone spoke to Nicholas, but he did not move. Then the porter switched off the lights in the hall. The lamps in the gallery went out too: the 'bridge of friendship'. The bulbs on the roof of the hall glowed on for a few seconds. Nicholas laid his hands on the arms of the wicker chair. He looked into the dark. The bright window of the porter's lodge hung low and narrow in the darkness of the hall. Nicholas watched it far below him. Hidden in the cave of his seat, the colour of his skin melted into the colour of the night.

Translated by John and Necke Mander

Günter Eich

DARMSTADT ADDRESS ON RECEIVING THE GEORG BÜCHNER PRIZE

... Since the time when the Doctor fed Woyzeck on peas the pretexts have changed. A pure, unbiased, unharnessed Science is now offered to us only with the addendum that its application must, can or – it is hoped – will serve the commonweal. Rose-coloured in this fashion, the soup, Woyzeck's pea soup, which is put in our plates, does taste considerably better. For the eye takes part in the meal, as we were reminded again recently.

We have many new means of allowing ourselves to be kept happy. One of them looks like this: preferably soon after birth, a person's brain is fitted with two tiny electrodes, an installation that does not make undue demands on the surgeon's skill. From this moment, says an American engineer, sense impressions and muscular reflexes can be completely controlled and directed by signals transmitted by special radios under government supervision. Hunger, fear, anger, euphoria, apathy – all of these would be rationed out to us in appropriate doses. No more agony of decision, no more burdensome liberty. Technically, the matter is perfect; all that is needed now is the approval of the administration and the law.

At present it is idle to speculate whether so happy a vision could become reality. What would interest me more is who would be responsible for the radio controls. And without presuming to regard my physical condition as cultural criticism, I confess to cold sweat at the thought of the kind of *élites* that are being called into existence with such convincing arguments. In my mind's eye I see them on team photographs, the beaming participants in courses, all ready to assume their public functions and activate our electrodes. Who will be rejected, who will be chosen, by what standards, and how many Hitlers will be among them?

Power, I am told, is the possibility of forcing human beings to

adopt definite behaviour patterns. As our Doctor put it, a most beautifully clear-cut case. But too crude, of course, and too utopian. There are less conspicuous ways of making the world more pleasant, making people happier, power more powerful and its sweetness even sweeter. Ways through the thicket of our mistrust that can be cleared more easily, if our mistrust is an undergrowth that offers serious resistance. If it is more than an indoor plant behind which one fine morning we rub our eyes and wonder who put up the barbed wire and prepared the public burnings.

But barbed wire and public burnings – how crude and inadequate! A cosy sort of inferno. One day – as far as power is concerned – they can safely be dumped and left to rot. There are more subtle instruments now.

It is against one of these more subtle instruments that we propose to take our stand, in the hope of winning the support of that writer in whose name we are gathered here.

A friend of Büchner wrote about him: 'His awareness of the intellectual substance he had gained always impelled him towards a drastic critique of everything that claimed, or succeeded in establishing, an absolute authority in human society or philosophy or art. One could see, by his brow, eyes and lips, that he practised this critique in his secret thoughts even when he was silent.'

The critic Georg Büchner is not known to us as the author of critical essays. True, he studied nature, read historical documents and the records of legal proceedings, but he wrote plays: his form of criticism, secret and silent, a critique translated into imaginative literature, more violent, more bitter and more challenging than any direct attack, because the spectator himself is called upon to judge, to deliver the verdict.

Criticism – a familiar phrase in connexion with Büchner, and I assume that I am not alone in regarding it as the key word, the one quality in Büchner that includes every other characterization and attribute: realism, political acumen, grotesqueness, pessimism, irony and even those soap bubbles, the clowning of Valerio and of Prince Leonce, even if at times they are closer to the sky than to our world.

Criticism here means a critical posture, the need, in the face of every object, to probe and inquire before saying yes or no, to ask

questions before giving an answer. It will always give offence in those places where an unconditional yes is demanded. In Germany we have only poor specimens of criticism, and even these are little valued. To our ears, in fact, the word itself sounds like an unqualified no. The grim determination with which we recognize authority makes us look upon criticism as a criminal act of defiance or, at best, as a deplorable aberration.

This is the reason too, I think, why Büchner's fame took so long to spread. He is not one of those classics in the family book-case, nor does every sixth-former know his name. There may well be something reassuring about both of these facts, but how did they come about? How did Büchner achieve what was denied to Goethe and Schiller? Although there was never any doubt as to his poetic distinction, his work clearly aroused an uneasiness, a defence mechanism or, at the very least, an affectionate perplexity – and this in his lifetime as well as in posterity. The perplexity begins with his indubitable date of birth, with the question whether he wasn't born at the wrong time, too late by sixty years. A fine subject for a comedy; but I would say all the same that Heine and Nestroy are a sufficient guarantee of Büchner's contemporaneity. And there is perplexity too in speculations as to how the definitive, lost version of *Woyzeck* may have ended. I quote: 'The biographical records reveal only that the poet did not remain in his nihilistic mood, so that the completed *Woyzeck*, which was written towards the end of his life, may well have been more conciliatory.' And a similar note of gentle regret at the evident failure of Büchner's *Weltanschauung* to attain full maturity strikes me in this account by a friend of Büchner's fiancée, Minna Jaegle: that he thought it both probable and natural that she had exercised a soothing, moderating influence upon him and made him feel more religious. In a current history of literature I read about *Leonce and Lena*: 'A playful nihilism rather than truly comic serenity.'

Minna Jaegle's posthumous papers included nothing in Büchner's hand. Clearly, she destroyed not only letters addressed to her, as she had every right to do, but also other notes and drafts by Büchner, in the fear that they might damage his memory. A younger brother of Büchner, a Professor of German at a French university who died in 1904, never so much as mentioned his name. Whether the defini-

tive version of *Woyzeck* and Büchner's fourth play, *Pietro Aretino*, were deliberately destroyed, is not known. If unfortunate circumstances were responsible, they were in league with the rest, like the mice whose hunger reduced Büchner's manuscript on the cranial nerves to a fragment.

Against all this, against mice, accident and the loving concern of those near to him, Büchner prevailed. Prevailed not by virtue of the content of his works – there is no such thing as content – but prevailed by virtue of his language. And throughout this address, language understood not quantitatively, as the sum of all the words and grammatical forms used, but qualitatively. By this I do not wish to gain an unfair advantage, to keep open an escape into paradoxes, but to avoid the word style, the style of Goethe's old age, the style of expressionism. What I am after is the quality common to all these styles.

Criticism – and Büchner's art is comprehended in this term – outlives its occasion where language has endowed it with a life of its own. Büchner's contemporaries, the writers of Young Germany, Gutzkow, Mundt, Kühne, Wienbarg – all critically orientated minds as he was – are almost forgotten. Their critical statements may have been urgent and justified, but even about the specific occasions we cannot waste a single word, there is no word left, because nothing they wrote became language. The decisions have been made, the occasions added to the great aggregate. Nothing remains to disturb us, no question mark which language might have preserved for us.

The language of poetry, then, whether informative or not, potentially informative, at any rate, and becoming present, not decorative and certainly more than the conveniences of usage, in which language has its place somewhere between record player and refrigerator, sex and tourism. That other language, then, which like creation itself contains a particle of nothingness, attempting the first topography in an unexplored region. It surprises, startles us, and is incontrovertible; it has the ability to win our agreement, and grows old as soon as that agreement has become general. It is one of our means of acquiring knowledge, *the* means, I am tempted to say. It is precise. To make vagueness one of the essential attributes of the language of poetry is not to denote the merely decorative metaphor,

but to attempt to make imaginative literature ineffectual and evade its discomfort. This neutering of language, at once repressive and cunning, is one dominant tendency of its adversary, language control.

What is it in language, though, that is neither neuter nor ineffectual, but uncomfortable and repulsive to language control? First of all, its very existence, the existence of a language that resists control. Next, its ability and its tendency to express itself figuratively. Figures can pose questions or embody questions. But are these the right questions? Are these the questions which lead straight to the answers held in readiness by power? Or could something be called in question by becoming language?

Quite apart from the question-and-answer game of power, the capacity of imaginative literature to provide answers seems slight to me. Even if messages and theses are at stake, their formulation takes place in characters and situations, in compliance with that principle of indirectness which I do not consider outmoded. Besides, why should an author know more about anything than a non-author? The priestly gesture is no longer made, and where the work is cleverer than its author, the reason is most probably that it has run away faster than he has from the answers. The awkward thing about our situation is that the answers arrive before the questions have been put, indeed that many well-disposed people believe in doing away with questions altogether, since there are so many good answers to be had. So one does without them, and the answers flourish and proliferate. They wake us up in the morning, eat wholemeal bread and breathe in the right way, play marches, burn incense and carry red flags or flags of a different colour. No, I am not out for answers; they arouse my mistrust. I opt for the question, for criticism, for the critical poet Georg Büchner, for a type of writer who poses questions and calls things in question. How did Büchner's friend put it? 'Critique of everything that claimed, or succeeded in establishing, an absolute authority.' What is in question is the critique of power, the refusal to say yes to its claims.

My attitude to power, I admit, is rather unreasonable. If power is the indissoluble substance of our world, I am somewhat comforted by the discovery of an anti-substance. When I hear that power has its antecedents even in the animal kingdom, that it is 'a universal

phenomenon of social order at every stage of its development and in every sphere of human community and social organization', I reply as follows to people's resentment of my anarchistic instinct: Isn't that to make every exertion of power seem harmless and beyond suspicion? By declaring power to be a universal principle it has been invested with a dubious sort of legitimacy.

And although power was established even before the Fall of Man, I obstinately insist that it is an evil institution. The remark that it will never cease to be active in our world must have been made during a conversation at the hairdresser's.

And I am intensely suspicious of the view that power must be maintained so as to safeguard values. Power has the tendency to become absolute, to become detached from its purpose and establish itself as a value. By maintaining itself, therefore, it can always claim to be maintaining values. Good and evil, in its decisions, are not a matter of choice, but accidents. True enough, power will always point to its ethical foundations when the occasion demands it. But when it does not, power resorts to other methods, the quiet suppression of truth, blatant lies or arguments *ad hoc*. I can think of no kind of inhumanity or depravity, no massacre or terror that was not justified by cunning arguments and presented as good and right. First decapitate your enemies – and rest assured that someone will praise you as a saviour. A concept of the State will be cited, or the struggle for existence, the savagery of nature, or the welfare of the race or the proletariat.

Fine words and fine phrases, but however sweet the coloratura of the sirens' song, on the rocks lie whitening bones for anyone to see. If they lie there long enough, they become part of nature. In the end it becomes a sign of indelicacy to notice them at all.

No, the idea of power does not fill me with ecstasy, I think it abominable, no matter whether power is claimed or established by stealth, won in battle, by violence or by peaceful and lawful means. Might rhymes not only with right, but with night and plight. To me it is the misery and darkness in our lives.

That power harnesses language to its ends is something we should know ever since we had a Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda. Unfortunately we do not know it. Goebbels, our hard

times and our hard hearts, final victory on banners and posters – all this is already historical, it was all over in 1945. Since then language has been no longer bent, pressed, broken and pulverized, language is a means of communication, everyone speaks, writes, reads it freely, anyone can look into it for himself, don't be childish, don't be an alarmist, we've more important things to think about. All right, then, I see the point, one shouldn't be suspicious, and language isn't all that important, just a little back passage in our house, and no danger threatens us there. And while we look fixedly into the wide street, where world events are performed for us with conferences and rockets to the moon, a few polite demons have come in and sit at our tables. They start talking, they speak to us, and really it's all very attractive, their sentences make you think – public interests come before private interests – a sentiment you can contradict only if you're an antisocial type. What's disturbing about it is their smile, which invites us to identify ourselves with them. A dangerous augur's smile, what do they mean by it? We open our mouths for a question.

But the answer forestalls it. True, it doesn't quite fit the question we had in mind, but it's very persuasive once again, words and sentences on a high ethical level, and one can't contradict them without descending to a lower level. Even more oppressive than this highly moral tone of theirs is an odour of decay that gradually fills the whole room. We feel like opening the window or at least asking a question.

But there are no longer any questions or windows to be opened. Nothing is in question, everything has been answered, from pregnancy to capital punishment. There are only answers now. They are handed out at a discount, so cheaply that one is forced to think there's no point in asking questions. And that is what they want us to think. Meanwhile they've put bars and railings around the house. They leave us with polite phrases about a good night's rest, and outside a key turns in the lock. We are left to ourselves with a few baskets, crates and sacks full of answers.

As far as answers are concerned, power is generous. Although the text, basically, is always the same, slight variations give an impression of diversity, of open-mindedness and concessions to humanity. Is it

not wicked, then, to assert that the general principle behind controlled language is to permit no questions to be asked about questionable things? The answers prove that there are no questionable things. But since we want to be neither augurs nor pure simpletons, we remain suspicious of the answering character of controlled language. Aren't hierarchies of values suggested here, and isn't the rank determined by the interests of power? Are values really at stake, or can they be manipulated to serve those interests? Aren't they interchangeable, and don't they serve to seduce us? And isn't their purpose always to force human beings to adopt a mode of behaviour subservient to power, to train them and make them unanimous?

About controlled language there exists a considerable body of literature which, I fear, is scarcely read, though it could be read. I can therefore refrain from speaking about it, and confine myself to speaking against it. In admitting my polemical intentions let me point out certain words that play a regrettable part in the so-called cultural criticism of our time. Some of them have also been taken up by historians of literature and are often found in passages about Georg Büchner especially. They all assume the character of a final judgement that cannot be contradicted, the character of answers. Disruptive, nihilistic, negative, despairing, intellectual, subversive, impious, etc. As a positive counterpart we are offered the pathos of the golden mean, Western civilization and those cultural values that have crept in unnoticed from the leader columns, reappear as hard work and efficiency and settle down in the finance columns as 'values conducive to industrial prosperity'. That the hierarchy of values presented here as self-evident is determined not by considerations for truth but by the exigencies of power could be obvious enough, but it is accepted in our world of faint-hearted conformists without so much as a protest, and one can count on applause if one takes the next step of discrediting anyone who resists power.

The reaction becomes most violent in our country when anyone dares to challenge the most abominable kind of language control, the religious. To say God where one means the devil has become an almost self-evident practice. The word emptied of all meaning in this way remains useful for decorative purposes and helps to embellish the façade. But if anyone pushes aside the paper flowers and

reveals the rubbish dump behind them, containing the good, the true, the beautiful, faith, hope and charity, all discarded and covered in filth, if anyone reveals that and asks what is going on, he is destructive, a nihilist and a muck-raker. If one must use the word nihilism, it applies to the processes of power in substituting the empty husks of words for the truth. One cannot speak of God if one does not know what language is. If one does so all the same, one destroys the name and reduces it to a propaganda slogan . . .

In language I include the esoteric, experimental, radical kinds. The more drastically it resists language control, the more it conserves true values. It is no accident that power persecutes these kinds of language with uncommon fury. Not because the acceptable content is lacking, but because it is impossible to introduce such a content into it by a conjuring trick. Because something comes into being there that cannot be used by power. It is not content but language that resists power. The partnership of language can prove stronger than the hostility of opinion.

There is a charming, very old aesthetic game, the quarrel about form and content. The golden vessel and the contour that encloses the living body, is how Theodor Storm put it. Gottfried Benn attempted new formulations, and one doesn't need to be much of a prophet to predict eternal life for the problem, right up to the music of the spheres, and it will welcome us on the other planets. It's a problem that cannot be killed, even if we look at it from the point of view of power.

Power suggests that it has solved the problem. Its index finger points in a certain direction: There the mystery lies, and it's no mystery at all, there is only content, everything depends on it, on throne and altar, proletariat, freedom, progress, peace, prosperity, justice, democracy. One feels shamed, one doesn't want to be against everything, and once again we've been tricked by the old magic. We stare at the contents presented to us, and ask no more questions. The problem is solved by the assertion that it doesn't exist or that it doesn't matter. That is how the stumbling-block of form, of language, is removed. A content that has become language couldn't be removed in this inconspicuous fashion, it would be a great boulder. Power needs a more amenable state of affairs, contents that can be

transported and bartered, toy balloons and soap bubbles, a nothing with something wrapped round it. That language control which reduces content to nothing is the means by which content can be put to use. Power rightly senses a certain mercenariness in the inclination to treat every content as genuine currency. That is how inflation begins.

The possession of weapons or of would-be truths, of printing presses, files of documents and ministries – I make the selection easy for myself, I leave nothing out and mean them all, including the past and the present and the future. And I mean not only the German language or any geographical area. Resemblances are growing between the Urals, the Ruhr and Carâcas: power, cravings for power, functionaries, key positions. Control over hands and control over souls, both ready to create its vocabulary and syntax.

And yet what we can see of language control may well be only a beginning. Perfection is anticipated in the definition, 'Man is a message.' A definition that fascinates me, though both the fascination and the thing fill me with mistrust. A message from where and to where, or a means of communication over the telegraph wire and the end of all wretched communication and tourism? The definition, whose author is the cyberneticist Norbert Wiener, is not meant as a metaphor and signifies this much at least: We need to devise a practicable language into which the entire man can be translated and so made communicable. This practicable language is being worked out, and the keyword is Language as information. Information is still defined as the communication of factual data.

My mistrust is extreme, and I guess that science will one day think realistically, as they put it, and extend its conception of factual data to include what is only potential or desirable: What we are to think, to believe, to hate and to love. The alliance in the East and West alike between reaction and technical progress, the bond between steel helmet and physics, are a likely premiss.

But we are still in the precincts. The roses around us are burgeoning hopefully, and since we are negative, we look for an effective poison that might prevent their flowering. We do not like the possibility of forcing people to adopt predetermined forms of behaviour. Even the prospect of a rise didn't make Woyzeck feel more

cheerful. Altogether, we would rather be difficult before we are condemned to silence. It is time for mockery and satire, high time. I for my part suspect that eternal values make power eternal, and our specious delight in things as they are reminds me of the happily obsequious face that I once had to put on. This affirmation of life in controlled language, this perpetual Strength-through-Joy motif and Be Nice to One Another! (But woe betide you if you aren't nice, and woe betide you if you don't rejoice!). Everything getting better, everything positive, our economy, our heroes and our love, why be always looking on the gloomy side, happiness and leisure are on the increase, don't worry about yourselves, we do the worrying for you. This pernicious optimism, so suspect because it is willed and made to measure. Eyes and ears tightly shut and a radiant smile on every face, a song, three and four, that is how we march into the thousand and one kinds of slavery, trusting in the future.

Serious attempts are being made to create the perfectly functioning society. We have no time left to say yes. If our work cannot be understood as criticism, as opposition and resistance, as an awkward question and a challenge to power, then we write in vain, then we are positive and decorate the slaughter-house with geraniums. We should have lost our chance to set down a word in the nothingness of controlled language.

Ladies and gentlemen, by professing a poetry that is opposition, I profess my allegiance to Georg Büchner. At least I assume that such a literature is not wholly uncongenial to his spirit. But in this profession I wish to include a few other allies to whom I assume that Büchner, who wrote *Woyzeck* and *Lenz*, is well disposed. They all belong to the order of the sad demeanour, they are powerless and opposed by instinct to power. And yet, I believe, the dignity of mankind has been entrusted to them. By revelling and suffering they fulfil our potentialities.

I include all those who refuse to be classified, the lone wolves and outsiders, the heretics in politics and religion, the dissatisfied, the imprudent, the fighters for lost causes, the crackpots, the failures, the unhappy dreamers, the cranks, the spoilsports, all those who cannot forget the misery of the world when they are happy.

Translated by Michael Hamburger

Christoph Meckel

THE PEACOCK

I saw no phoenix mount from Germany's ashes.
Rummaging in the ash with my foot
I turned up charred fins, horns and sloughs –
yet I saw a peacock, swirling up the ash
with one wing of wood and the other of iron,
growing enormous, and he whipped
at the flakes where the burning had been
and he fanned out his plumage.

I saw old crows creep out of Germany's ashes
and stubbly nightingales with hoarse throats
and cocks with swordfish beaks and bald combs
to whistle and sing the praises of that bird.
I saw them snorting in the ashes of all fires
where the wind was driving, pushing cold smoke
over broad places where little was gold that glittered.

I saw no phoenix mount from Germany's ashes;
yet I saw a peacock in the time when his plumage shone,
I saw him spread a tail in glorious radiances
in the counterlight of icegrey skies and lightnings
and heard the jubilation of crows and sparrows and saw
magpie flocks plunge into his plumage of gold,
lice darkly evolving out of his plumage,
big ants feeding on his eyes.

Translated by Christopher Middleton

Hans Arp

AMERICA

A threadbare clown
climbs on to the back
of a threadbare clown
on to this threadbare clown's
back
climbs another threadbare clown
and so forth.
On to the last threadbare
clown's back
climbs a starry-eyed Columbus
to keep watch for his caravels
which are meanwhile etched in ocean
in the dark quarter too
whence a groaning comes a death-rattle a gurgling
and where even the celestial lamps
tremble with fear.

A beggar with a head like a dried pear
discovers in the wardrobe
of the starry-eyed Columbus
an immaculate unworn America.
Not far from the beggar's cave
in the wide sandy plain
once a day a continent rises
a page not yet written on.
This continent has four massive eagle's legs
with powerful redlacquered pedicured claws.
Like a harpy this continent plunges
into the celestial vault

and screams:

'I want the immaculate unworn America.'
To keep things tidy the beggar counts
the remainder of his days.

The carious skeleton of a clown
grows fat flabby and rich
and buys a trained donkey.
Unexpectedly it becomes
oddly expectant.
Overnight this donkey grows four legs
out of its back.
Now neither one can decide
on which of the four legs
to go
for a ride.

When the beggar with a head like a dried pear
became sad
the starry-eyed Columbus tried
the superhumanly possible.
He pledged what language deposits
and forwarded for a week
smooth-tongued hypocritical onomatopoems.
To the beggar he pledged
the miraculously whooping solid diamond
self-playing gipsy-violin.
Faced with this miraculous violin
even blue skies which for years had looked
on the bright side
would have to pack it in.
The result being
that both
the beggar and His Insignificance Columbus
high high up there
in the brightest depths of the eye of heaven

with all the angels wild as foxes
would dance to the indescribable music of the diamond violin
and be rid of sadness.

Translated by Christopher Middleton

Notes on Authors

CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON: Born 1926. Two books of poems: *Torse 3, poems 1949-61* (1962), and *Nonsequences/Selfpoems* (1965); London: Longmans, Green, Ltd. Co-edited, with Michael Hamburger the anthology *Modern German Poetry, 1910-60*, London: MacGibbon and Kee Ltd, 1962. Other translations include: Robert Walser, *The Walk and Other Stories*, London: John Calder Ltd, 1957, and verse plays by Hugo von Hoffmannsthal, New York: Pantheon Books: Bollingen Series, 1961 and 1963. *Athenerkomödie*, a comic opera with music by Hans Vogt, was first performed at Mannheim in 1964. Has taught at the universities of Zürich and London; is now teaching at the University of Texas in Austin, Texas, U.S.A.

HANS ARP: 1887-1966. Internationally famous as pioneer of Dada and ageometric sculpture. Published poems regularly since 1920; was much sought-after as contributor to avantgarde little magazines. Collected poems: *Gesammelte Gedichte I, II*, Zürich: Arche Verlag, 1963-4. Lived at Meudon (France).

HANS CARL ARTMANN: Born 1921. Austrian poet, novelist, playwright, translator. Pioneered (against the strong conservative establishment in Austria) new experimental forms in poetry and prose. His work appears regularly in little magazines. Poems: *med anna schwaozzn dintn*, 1958. The original of 'i am a polar planet' appeared in *Eröffnungen* (ed. H. F. Kulterer), Vienna, 1963, No. 8/9. Prose: O. Walter Verlag published in 1964 a book with the title (Englished) *The Search for Yesterday, or Snow on a Hot Bread Roll: From the Journal of a Bizarre Loverman*. Lives in Stockholm.

INGEBORG BACHMANN: Born 1926. Austrian: recognized in the 1950s as one of the most sensitive voices of her generation. Poems, stories, radio-plays, librettos (for Hans Werner Henze). Poems: *Die gestundete Zeit*, 1953; *Anrufung des grossen Bären*, Munich: Piper Verlag, 1956. In English: *The Thirtieth Year* (stories), London: André Deutsch, 1964. The BBC has broadcast radio-plays by her. Lives in Berlin.

KONRAD BAYER: 1932-64. Austrian experimental writer: poems, stories, miniature plays. Co-founder and editor of the Austrian little magazine *Edition 62*; *The Times Literary Supplement* published (3 September 1964) a statement by him on the aims and activities of the Vienna Group, a loose association of experimental writers (Bayer, Artmann, Rühm, Wiener). O. Walter Verlag publish a miscellany of their work: *die mustersternwarte*. Books: *der stein der weisen / texte*, 1963; *Der Kopf des Vitus Bering*, Olten: O. Walter Verlag, 1965.

HANS BENDER: Born 1919. Co-editor of the magazine *Akzente* since it was founded in 1953. Known chiefly for his stories, but has published also two novels and a book of poems. Stories: *Wölfe und Tauben*, 1957; *Mit dem Postschiff*, Munich: C. Hanser Verlag, 1963. Lives in Cologne.

MANFRED BIELER: Born 1934. Lives in East Berlin and Prague. Stories, articles and plays by him have been translated into Russian, Czech, Hungarian. His novel, *Bonifaz, oder der Matrose in der Flasche* (1963) has been translated into English: *The Sailor in the Bottle*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965. 'Wedding March' and 'Dalya' were translated from typescripts, but were due to appear in a collection of stories in 1966 (Aufbau Verlag, Berlin).

JOHANNES BOBROWSKI: 1917-65. Born in Tilsit; grand-nephew of Joseph Conrad. His poems were inspired by his unique feeling for East European and Russian landscapes, figures, folkways. Prisoner of war in Russia till 1949. Lived and worked in East Berlin, where he was a reader for the Union-Verlag. A novel: *Levins Mühle*, 1964 (English translation forthcoming). Stories: *Boehlen-dorff und Mäusefest*, 1965. Poems: *Sarmatische Zeit* (1961) and *Schattenland Ströme* (1962), Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt. In English: *Shadow Land: Selected Poems*, London: Donald Carroll, 1966.

PAUL CELAN: Born 1920. Born and grew up in Czernovitz, Rumania; 1942-3 in a forced labour camp; 1945-8 in Vienna; then moved to Paris, where he has lived ever since (is now a French subject). Arch-hermetist of post-1945 poetry, stringently purist conserver of seraphic tone. Translator of Rimbaud, Valéry, Block, Mandelstamm, Essenin. Poems: *Mohn und Gedächtnis*, 1952; *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*, 1955; *Sprachgitter*, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1959; *Die Niemandrose*, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1963.

HILDE DOMIN: Born 1912. Refugee in Italy, England, eventually Santo Domingo. Returned to Heidelberg in 1954. Poems: *Nur eine Rose als Stütze*, 1959; *Rückkehr der Schiffe*, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1962; *Hier*, 1964. Translator of modern Spanish stories: *Spanien erzählt*, 1963.

GÜNTER EICH: Born 1907. His radio-plays and poems have made him one of the most influential writers of his generation. Several radio-plays have been broadcast by the BBC; 'Dreams' appeared in *Evergreen Review*, No. 21, 1961. His first post-1945 book of poems was *Abgelegene Gehöfte*, 1948; the next, *Botschaften des Regens*, 1955, established him as the inaugurator of a new lyric style - wiry, colloquial, cryptic. His latest collection: *Zu den Akten*, Frankfurt am Main: P. Suhrkamp Verlag, 1964. The prose published here is a slightly shortened version of the speech he made on receiving the Georg Büchner prize; the original appeared in *Akzente*, 1960, No. 1. Lived until recently in Bavaria; now living in Austria.

HANS MAGNUS ENZENSBERGER: Born 1929. Audacious 'angry' poet; his long poem 'Schaum' (*landessprache*, 1960) matched Allen Ginsberg's 'Howl'

in venom if not in rhetorical power. Is also a brilliant analytic and polemical essayist (*Einzelheiten*, 1962). Has been a radio-producer and publisher's reader (with P. Suhrkamp Verlag). Translator of William Carlos Williams (1962). Edited the anthology *Museum der modernen Poesie* and a collection of traditional children's poems and dance-songs, *Allerleirauh*, 1961. Poems: *verteidigung der wölfe*, 1957; *landessprache*, 1960; *blindenschrift*, Frankfurt am Main: P. Suhrkamp Verlag, 1964. Lives in Norway and Berlin.

ERICH FRIED: Born 1921. Born in Vienna, has lived in London since 1938. Poems: *Gedichte*, 1958; *Reich der Steine*, 1963; *Überlegungen*, 1964; *Warngedichte*, Munich: C. Hanser Verlag 1964. Novel: *Ein Soldat und ein Mädchen*, 1960; stories: *Kinder und Narren*, 1965. His compact, punning style has had a considerable influence on current trends in poetry. He is also widely known for his new Shakespeare translations, and for his translations from T. S. Eliot, Dylan Thomas, e. e. cummings.

GÜNTER BRUNO FUCHS: Born 1928. Conscientious vagrant; typographer, graphic artist (woodcuts) and founder of several eccentric enterprises in poetry-publication, e.g. *Neues bilderreiches Poetarium*, 1963, f., a coloured broadsheet also useful as a wall-decoration. Novel: *Krümelnnehmer oder 34 Kapitel aus dem Leben des Tierstimmen-Imitators Ewald K.*, 1963. Poems: *Nach der Haussuchung*, 1957; *Brevier eines Degenschluckers* (with prose), 1960; *Trinkermeditationen* (with collages by Ali Schindehütte), 1962; *Pennergesang: Gedichte und Chansons*, Munich: C. Hanser Verlag, 1965. Lives in Berlin.

RAINER MARIA GERHARDT: 1927-54. Edited (with Claus Bremer) the avant-garde magazine *fragmente*, one of the first experimental magazines to appear after 1945. Two books of poems: *Der Tod des Hamlet*, 1950; *Umkreisung*, 1952. Charles Olson's poem to him - 'To Gerhardt, there, among Europe's things of which he has written us in his "Brief an Creeley und Olson"' - appears in Olson's book *The Distances*, 1960. The present translations first appeared in *Origin* (1st series), iv, Winter 1951-2, ed. Cid Corman; they constitute two sections of Gerhardt's 'Brief' and are based on a text which differs somewhat from that published in *Umkreisung*.

EUGEN GOMRINGER: Born 1925 (in Bolivia). Pioneered concrete poetry in the early 1950s: *konstellationen*, 1953. Was secretary to Max Bill at the Ulm Hochschule für Gestaltung, 1954-8; since 1962 has been managing director of the Swiss Werkbund (SWB). Edits the pamphlet series *konkrete poesie* from Frauenfeld, Switzerland. His main collection to date is *die konstellationen* (1953-62), Frauenfeld: Eugen Gomringer Press, 1963.

GÜNTER GRASS: Born 1927. His two massive novels, *The Tin Drum* (1959; English translation: Secker & Warburg, 1963) and *Dog Years* (1963; English translation: Secker & Warburg, 1965) have made him better known in England and the U.S.A. than any German writer of his generation. *Cat and*

Mouse, a novella, likewise translated by Ralph Manheim, appeared in 1963. His play *Onkel! Onkel!* was performed in Edinburgh in November 1965. Poems: *Die Vorzüge der Windhühner*, 1956; *Gleisdreieck*, 1960. In English: *Selected Poems*, London: Secker and Warburg, 1966. 'The Salt Lake Line', adapted by Christopher Holme, was broadcast on the BBC Third Programme in 1962; the original, 'Noch zehn Minuten bis Buffalo', was first performed at Bochum in 1959. Lives in Berlin.

RUDOLF HAGELSTANGE: Born 1912. First became known with his sonnet-cycle, *Venezianisches Credo*, 1952. Has written several travel-books and novels. Poems: *Ballade vom verschütteten Leben*, 1952; *Zwischen Stern und Staub*, 1953; *Corazón*, Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, 1964. Lives at Unteruhldingen on Lake Constance.

HELMUT HEISSENBÜTTEL: Born 1921. His so-called 'texts' are a kind of linguistic spectral-analysis of modern forms of consciousness, atomized, dis-oriented, admassed. Earlier books: *kombinationen*, 1954, *topographien*, 1956, both published by Bechtle Verlag, Esslingen. His work is now published by O. Walter Verlag, Olten, Switzerland; so far, five volumes have appeared: *Textbuch I, II, III, IV, V*. He is also a fine critical essayist. Lives in Stuttgart.

WALTER HÖLLERER: Born 1922. Co-editor of *Akzente* since 1954; since 1961, editor of *Sprache im technischen Zeitalter*. Has been extremely active for over a decade as impresario and theoretician of new writing, e.g. the anthology *Transit*, 1954, the experimental miscellany *Movens*, 1960. Head of the Department of Literature at the Berlin Technische Universität. Poems: *Der andere Gast*, 1952; new enlarged edition, Munich: C. Hanser Verlag, 1964.

MAX HÖLZER: Born 1915. Austrian poet and translator. Was for many years a lawyer. Edited *Surrealistische Publikationen*, 1950-2, the first post-1945 magazine to publish French Surrealist writers. Has translated Breton, Sarraute, Péret. Poems: *Der Doppelgänger*, 1959; *Nigredo*, Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1962. Lives in Frankfurt am Main.

PETER HUCHEL: Born 1903. Freelance writer during the 1920s and 1930s. Prisoner of war in Russia till 1945. Till 1948 was programme-director on (East) Berlin radio. In 1949, became editor of the GDR literary magazine *Sinn und Form*; was suspended in 1962 for political reasons, having made the magazine the only GDR periodical to function as an international left-wing forum. Poems: *Gedichte*, 1948; *Chausseen Chausseen*, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1963. Lives in Potsdam.

ERNST JANDL: Born 1926. Austrian experimental (phonic) poet. Works as a schoolteacher in Vienna. Translator of Robert Creeley's novel *The Island*. Since his first book, *Andere Augen*, 1956, he has written chiefly sound-poems, of which he is a highly accomplished reader in public. Selection in *Zwischen Räume*, Wiesbaden: Limes Verlag, 1963. Other books: *lange gedichte*, 1964;

klare gerührt, 1964. Some of his work, including English poems, appeared in *mai hart lieb zapfen eibe hold*, London: Writers' Forum Poets No. 11, 1965.

UWE JOHNSON: Born 1934. 'Berlin, border of the divided world', written before the building of the Berlin Wall (August 1961), is to some extent an 'ars poetica' or 'anima poetae': all Johnson's writings, notable for their microscopic realism, concern the division of Germany and the problem of truth in the historical situation. He lived in East Germany until 1959; thereafter in West Berlin. In English: *Speculations about Jakob* (*Mutmassungen über Jakob* 1959), Jonathan Cape, 1963; *The Third book about Achim* (*Das dritte Buch über Achim*, 1961) is due in 1966. A third novel, *Zwei Ansichten*, appeared in 1965. Also: *Karsch und andere Prosa*, 1964. Ursule Molinaro's translation first appeared in *Evergreen Review*, No. 21 (1961).

KARL KROLOW: Born 1915. His first influential collection of poems was *Die Zeichen der Welt*, 1952. Has translated Spanish and French poets, notably French Surrealists; and is an acute theoretician of modern poetry. Poems: *Fremde Körper*, Frankfurt am Main: P. Suhrkamp Verlag, 1959; *Unsichtbare Hände*, Frankfurt am Main: P. Suhrkamp Verlag, 1962. *Ausgewählte Gedichte*, 1962, is a selection from his nine books of poems. Lives in Darmstadt.

GÜNTER KUNERT: Born 1929. Lives in East Berlin. His work includes poetry, prose and TV plays. Some short prose-pieces, like parables, *Tagträume*, appeared in 1964. The two most recent books of poems are: *Erinnerung an einen Planeten* (1963) and *Der ungebetene Gast* (1965), both published by C. Hanser Verlag, Munich. In English: prose pieces in *Stand*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1965; 'On the City Railway' in *Art and Literature* (Paris), Autumn 1966. The original of 'Worries' appeared in *Atelier 2*, ed. Klaus Wagenbach, a paperback anthology published by S. Fischer Verlag.

SIEGFRIED LENZ: Born 1926. First became widely known with his play, *Zeit der Schuldlosen*, in 1961, though the first of his four novels had appeared ten years earlier. 'Luke, gentle servant' is characteristic of more recent work: the close-grained realism, as well as his special theme of persecution and deadly conflict. Stories: *Jäger des Spotts*, Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, 1958; *Das Feuerschiff*, 1960; *So zärtlich war Suleyken*, 1955. Lives in Hamburg.

REINHARD LETTAU: Born 1929. Was until recently a professional academic (for a while at Smith College, U.S.A. – he has a Harvard Ph.D.). Two collections of stories: *Schwierigkeiten beim Häuserbauen* and *Auftritt Manigs*, Munich: C. Hanser Verlag, 1962 and 1963. In English: *Obstacles*, New York: Pantheon Books, and London: Calder & Boyars, 1965. Lives in Berlin.

JAKOV LIND: Born 1927. Born in Vienna; refugee in Holland in 1938; lived for two years in Germany with forged papers 1943–5. Thereafter to Israel; then for two years at the Max Reinhardt Academy of Dramatic Art in Vienna. His

first book of stories, *Eine Seele aus Holz*, 1962, has been translated into eleven languages: in English, *Soul of Wood*, London: Jonathan Cape. Like his novel, *Landschaft in Beton* (1963), English translation – *Landscape in Concrete*, Methuen, 1966 – the stories are mordant satirical parables of evil. Lives in London.

CHRISTOPH MECKEL: Born 1935. Poems, stories, graphic work – fantastic inventions ranging from the idyllic to the tragi-grotesque. Five books of his engravings have been published by H. Ellermann Verlag. Prose: *Im Lande der Umbramauten*, 1961; *Tullipan*, 1965. The original of 'The Lion' appeared in the miscellany *Beispiele*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1962. Poems: *Hotel für Schlafwandler*, 1958; *Nebelhörner*, 1959; *Wildnisse*, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1962; *Gedichtbilderbuch* (with coloured woodcuts), 1964. Lives alternately in Berlin and Oertlingen in Württemberg.

FRANZ MON: Born 1926. Co-editor, with Walter Höllerer and Manfred de la Motte, of the experimental miscellany *Movens*, 1960. Poems: *artikulationen*, Pfullingen: G. Neske Verlag, 1959; *protokoll an der kette*, 1960; *verläufe*, 1962; *sehgänge*, 1964. Widely published in avantgarde little magazines, his work includes permutation-poems, typographic and lettrist texts. Two of his 'text-pictures' appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement* of 3 September 1964, as well as his article 'Letters as Picture and Language'. The poem 'grundriss' ('groundplan') is a pattern of phonic relations, involving semantic disjunctions, which cannot be repeated in another language, though this translation does preserve the consonant series *h, f, l*, and the vowel series *e, o* as strictly as possible. Mon lives in Frankfurt am Main.

HANS ERICH NOSSACK: Born 1901. His early manuscripts were destroyed in the bombing of Hamburg in 1943 (he was forbidden to publish by the Nazis). Several novels, essays, plays, books of stories. His narratives are about characters with shattered lives who are looking for self-renewal in unknown forms of experience: 'the naked self and the hazards of the unknown' (P. Prochnik). Stories: *Begegnung in Vorraum*, Frankfurt am Main: P. Suhrkamp Verlag, 1963 (the title story of which appeared in *Great German Short Stories*, New York, 1960). Lives in Darmstadt.

HEINZ PIONTEK: Born 1925. Poems: *Die Furt*, 1952; *Die Rauchfahne*, 1956; *Wassermarken*, 1957; *Mit einer Kranichfeder*, 1962. Stories: *Vor Augen*, 1955; *Kastanien aus dem Feuer*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1963. Essays: *Buchstab-Zauberstab*, 1959. Lives in Munich.

KUNO RAEBER: Born 1922. Swiss poet, living in Munich. Has also published a travel-book, *Calabria*, 1961. Poems: *Gesicht im Mittag*, 1950; *Die verwandelten Schiffe*, Neuwied am Rhein: H. Luchterhand Verlag, 1957; *Gedichte*, 1960; *Flussufer*, 1963.

CHRISTA REINIG: Born 1926. Lived until 1963 in East Berlin, where she worked as an art-historian; then went to West Germany. Poems: *Die Zeit von*

Finisterre, 1960; *Gedichte*, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1963. Has also published stories. Lives in Munich.

KLAUS ROEHLER: Born 1929. Created a new satirical style during the 1950s – very sharp pictures of prevailing moods among the young generation at that time – e.g. 'Bubul', one of the funniest satirical stories in modern German. A farce: *Das Geschrei*, 1956; a radio-play and a TV play. Stories: *Die Würde der Nacht*, Munich: Piper Verlag, 1958; in English – *The Dignity of Night*, London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1960. Lives in Frankfurt am Main.

NELLY SACHS: Born 1891. Grew up in Berlin, escaped to Sweden in 1940 and has lived in Stockholm ever since. Her first book of poems, *In den Wohnungen des Todes*, appeared in 1946; she was discovered by younger writers in the later 1950s. Poetic plays: *Zeichen im Sand*, 1962. Collected poems: *Fahrt ins Staublose*, Frankfurt am Main: P. Suhrkamp Verlag, 1961. Also known for her translations from Swedish poets. Nobel Prize for Literature, 1966.

ARNO SCHMIDT: Born 1914. Was a mathematical child-prodigy; his studies at Breslau were stopped by the Nazis. Cartographer in the German army of occupation in Norway; taken prisoner of war in Belgium, 1945. 1945–6 English interpreter in a police college. Foremost large-scale prose-experimentalist; five novels appeared between 1951 and 1960. The present extract comes from his fourth, *Die Gelehrtenrepublik*. Several books of stories, fifteen of translations, a biography of Fouqué, a book on Karl May and numerous essays. Lives at Bargfeld (Kreis Celle).

WOLFDIETRICH SCHNURRE: Born 1920. Grew up in Berlin during the 1920s and 1930s; was for six and a half years in military service. Co-founder of the 'Gruppe 47'. At least twelve books of stories, widely translated. Poems: *Kassiber*, 1956; *Abendländler*; *satirische Gedichte*, 1957; *Kassiber: neue Gedichte*, Frankfurt am Main: P. Suhrkamp Verlag, 1964. Lives in West Berlin.

MARTIN WALSER: Born 1927. First became widely known with his novel, *Ehen in Philippsburg*, 1957; English translation – *The Gardarene Club*, Longmans, 1959. Novels, stories and plays; a few brilliant essays, e.g. 'Unser Auschwitz' in the magazine *Kurbuch*, No. 1, 1965. 'After Siegfried's Death' is a characteristic piece of deadpan social satire. Stories: *Ein Flugzeug über dem Haus*, 1955; *Lügendgeschichten*, Frankfurt am Main: P. Suhrkamp Verlag, 1964. Lives in Friedrichshafen on Lake Constance.

PETER WEISS: Born 1916. Refugee in England, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland; has lived in Sweden since 1939 (a Swedish subject since 1945). Best known in England for his *Marat-Sade* play in Peter Brook's production (1964, f.). Two novels: *Abschied von den Eltern*, 1961; *Fluchtpunkt*, 1962. A narrative: *Gespräch der drei Gehenden*, 1963. His 'oratorio', *Die Ermittlung* (first performed in West Berlin in October 1965) was based on transcripts of the 1964–5 trial of war-criminals in Frankfurt; the original of 'My Place' was first published in

the magazine *Der Monat*, May 1965. His 'Zehn Arbeitspunkte', appearing in a Stockholm newspaper and copied in the GDR paper *Neues Deutschland* in 1965, outraged many West German liberal and left-wing writers with its announcement of his adherence to the German Democratic Republic.

WOLFGANG WEYRAUCH: Born 1907. Was for a time an actor; began to write in 1929; military service 1940-45; prisoner of war in Russia. Thereafter editor and publisher's reader in Hamburg; now lives at Gauting, near Munich. Ten books of stories, also radio-plays. Poems: *An die Wand geschrieben*, 1950; *Gesang, um nicht zu sterben*, 1946; *Die Spur: neue Gedichte*, Olten: O. Walter Verlag, 1963.

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P8-ADC-227

